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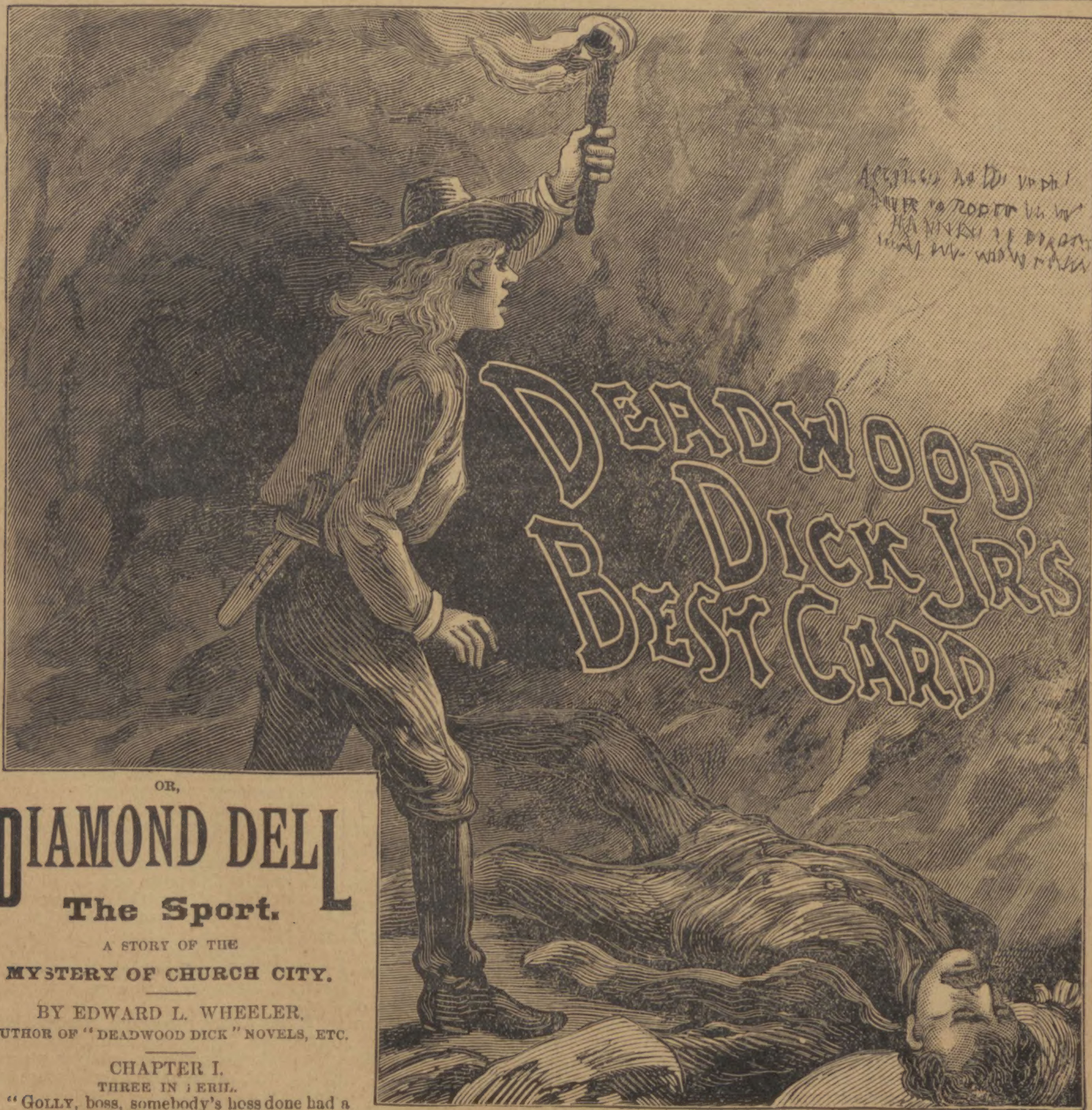
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OR, DIAMOND DELL The Sport.

A STORY OF THE
MYSTERY OF CHURCH CITY.

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THREE IN JERIL.

"GOLLY, boss, somebody's boss done had a
nasty tumble down dar!"

DEADWOOD DICK LEANED EAGERLY FORWARD TO MAKE OUT THE WORDS.

"Right you are, Washington. I wonder if the rider went down with the poor beast?"

"Give it up, boss. Reckon dar ain't only one way to find out."

"And how is that, my calla lily?"

"Go down dar an' see—Ha! ha! ha!"

"You are inclined to be funny, Whitewash. Suppose you dismount and scramble down and ascertain?"

"I was only foolin', boss; deed dat was all. I don' wan' to go down dar."

"Nevertheless I want you to go. No fooling, now!"

Two horsemen—one a good-looking, fearless-faced Westerner, roughly clad, well mounted and armed; hair long and resting upon his shoulders in a heavy wave; face smooth, and eyes dark, with a keen, magnetic intensity in their unsearchable depths.

The other was a "coon" of the fullest blood, who looked as if he might have been plucked at random from a Southern cotton field that very morning. He had on an apology for a hat, his feet were bare and his clothes hung upon his person in a baggy fashion.

Quaint pards they were, traveling along a wild and rugged mountain trail.

They had advanced some distance on a narrow ledge, where any one unaccustomed to such riding would have hesitated about venturing at all.

On one side rose a sheer cliff, its height not to be seen from the narrow trail; and on the other a sloping descent of split and shattered rock for a thousand feet or more, all the way to a thread-like creek that wound its way at the bottom.

Altogether a scene of wild, weird beauty.

Of a sudden the negro had drawn rein with the exclamation quoted.

Afar down the rugged slope he had espied the carcass of a horse, which, from appearance, did not seem to be much decayed.

Deadwood Dick, Jr., for the man with the magnetic eyes was, in fact, the noted detective—smiled as Washington White slipped out of the saddle with a muttered and mumbled string of imprecations against his hard fate, and playfully added:

"Do you good, Whitewash, to take a little exercise after riding so long."

"Golly, Mars' Dick, I's willin' fo' you to hab de benefit yo'self, if you wants de exercise. What yo' say?"

"I say go down, you chunk of stove polish!"

That settled it, and the black obeyed.

He let himself down carefully from point to point in a zigzag course.

From where he stood Dick could trace dark stains on the rocks that ran in a line to where the carcass lay, proof that the horse had fallen from the ledge.

After some minutes of pretty severe work, the nimble-footed negro reached the body of the horse.

"See anything of a man there?" from above.

"No, sah; no man heah."

"Look further down."

"Nothin' dar, sah."

"How long do you think the horse has been there?"

"A full-up month, at de bery least, sah, I should 'pine to reckon," was the response.

"Well, take a look and see if the horse was knocked in the head before it was thrown over; if not, then it must have been an accident. No saddle, is there?"

"No, sah."

The negro moved around to the head

of the dead beast, and a moment later called out:

"Golly, boss, de brute sure been shot! Got a hole ker-plunk in de right place, an' I bet he nebber done kicked oncet."

"That settles it. Either some beast its owner was glad to part with, or that met with an accident and had to be killed. You may come up, now."

Up the sharp ascent the black made his way, and when he reached the top his perspiring skin looked as if he had been varnished.

"I jis' wush you had to make dat climb, Deadwood Dick, an' see how yo' like it!" he spluttered.

"Just what I brought you along for, Whitewash," said Dick, laughing. "Get aboard, now, and you'll be surprised to find how good you'll feel when you get rested."

Whitewash obeyed orders, and they proceeded on their way.

A hundred yards further on they came to a bend, Dick in the lead, when another horseman met them.

The two animals came head to head and stopped. Instantly came the strong Teutonic ejaculation.

"Py tam!"

"Hi! hi! hi!" laughed the much-amused Whitewash.

"Don't run over us, Deutscher," warned Deadwood Dick.

The man so abruptly met was a short, fat Dutchman, astride a mule.

The look of surprise on his round face and his forceful ejaculation were in harmony.

"Yaw, dot vas all right," he hastened to assure, "but how you vas going to get py me round about, ain't id? No room to pass, py ching!"

"Why, we'll have to shoot that mule of yours and throw it over the ledge," Dick started to say, in jest, when the look on the man's face changed to one of alarm and horror commingled.

"Vhat!" he cried. "You shoot mein Vilhelm Pismarck? Vell, I dinks me nicht, py ching!"

"Then maybe you can suggest some way," intimated Dick, smiling.

The man scratched his head.

"Say, boss," spoke up Whitewash.

"Well, what is it?"

"Mebby shua 'nuff dis am de way dat hoss got down dar."

"Perhaps you are right, Snowball," and Dick thought it quite probable.

"By the way, Deutscher," he asked, "can you tell me how far we are from Church City? That is the point we are heading for, or hope we are, at all events."

"Id vas yust 'poudt five miles, I dinks me. But, dot don't say how you vas going to get there mit me in der vay. Maybe now you toldt me dot, ain't id? I can't go pack unt I can't go for, unt py ching I hate me like doose to go down!"

Whitewash was on the real darkey "haw haw!" and Dick had to smile, as well, as he asked:

"What is your name?"

"Vilhelm Schloss."

"And do you live at Church City?"

"Yaw, yaw, dot vas right; unt mein frau unt kinter, also."

Dick knew German sufficiently to understand.

"Well, friend Schloss, for the sake of the wife and children I'll turn and let you pass. We may have to sacrifice my man, Whitewash, but he will be willing to die in a good cause, I know."

With that, Dick took the reins well in hand, spoke to his horse, and the noble creature reared upon its hind legs, balanced, Dick lying close to its back, and

at the word of command it turned surely and steadily, and the next moment was headed in the opposite direction.

CHAPTER II.

GHASTLY DISCOVERY.

It had been a daring, a terrible, a thrilling feat!

To turn as it were in mid air, there on that projecting corner of the narrow trail; none but a Deadwood Dick would have attempted it.

"Py ching!" cried Schloss. "I wouldn't give me five cents vor you unt your horse unt der whole peesness, dot times. Who you vas, anyway? Wie heissen Sie?"

"That's nothing when you are used to it," was responded. "My name is Bristol, better known as Deadwood Dick."

The Dutchman gave a start at mention of the name, which, looking the other way at the time, Dick did not notice. And he made haste to rejoin:

"Not Teadwood Tick, der creat bolice vellers? Py ching! I thought me you vas no schmall kartofel. I wouldn't try me dot trick for a t'ousan' dollars—no, not for a million, py ching!"

Whitewash, meantime, had slipped out of the saddle, and was standing with his back against the rock wall, his hands outstretched with the palms against the wall as if for better security. Dick's proposal to sacrifice him had filled him with alarm, expressed in every lineament of his ebony face.

"What's the matter, 'my calla lily?" inquired Bristol.

"I ain' willin' to die in a good cause, nor a bad cause, nor any od'er kind ob a cause, an' dat's what am de mattah," cried the negro, his eyes open to their widest extent. "Yo' kin push de hoss ober ef yo' want to, but yo' bet yo' life dis chil' stays right heah!"

"Mount your horse and turn, the same as I did," ordered Dick.

The poor fellow's eyes rolled despairingly, and it was now the Dutchman's turn to laugh.

"Yaw! yaw! dot vas id," he approved. "You get on and turn roundt, unt den ve peen all right, maybe, ain't id? Yaw, yaw, dot vas so, plack-mans!"

"You turn yo'se'f," retorted Whitewash. "I wouldn't git on dat hoss an' try to turn roun' heah fo' all de gold in de new Jerusalem! You heah me? Dat's what I said, boss, dat's what!"

"Then what are we going to do about it?"

"Yo' better shove dat ol' mewel off 'm de trail, dat's what! A hoss is wuff more 'n a mewel, any day."

"Nein, nein!"

"Yas, wuff more'n nine mewels, too."

"Nein! nein! You lays von finger on Vilhelm Pismarck, unt py ching somedings happens, you pet me!"

"Well, take hold of your horse's nose and see if you can't back him," suggested Bristol. "I noticed a fissure a short distance back there that maybe we can pinch into and let this man pass."

"All right, ef you take de 'sponsibility, boss. I wouldn't give much fo' de hoss, you bet!"

"Try it, anyhow."

The black obeyed, and the trembling animal began to back slowly along the trail.

It was a slow procedure, for the animal would not take a step until it had felt of the spot where it was going to place its hoof, but, eventually, the fissure was reached.

"Back past it," commanded Dick, "and let me enter first. It will be easier to get your horse in, then."

This was done, and Dick rode into the gap.

It was a narrow place, barely wide enough for the horse alone, and Dick had to draw his legs to enter.

When he had passed in far enough to allow room for the negro's horse, he stopped, and Whitewash led his animal in easily enough and the German had the trail to himself.

"Dot vas nice, dot vas ver' nice, shentlemans!" he called out, as he passed by the opening. "I not vorget me dot gootness, und ven I get me pack again to Church City ve dakes somedings on id, maype, ain't id? You pet me id vas. So-long, Teadwood Tick!"

"So-long, Vilhelm!" responded Dick.

"Unt goot-py, plack-mans!"

"Good riddance!"

The Teuton laughed and rode away.

"Now, Whitewash, to get out of here again," observed the master.

"Pity you didn't plunk into dat ol' mewel, boss, an' knock de bery daylight out ob bof 'em," growled Washington.

"Always do unto others as you want to be done by," reminded Dick. "We are none the worse off, and the Dutchman was in a worse place for backing than we were."

"Guess dat am 'bout so, boss."

"Let your horse lower its head, now, so it can see behind, and it will back out all right."

"Dat's jis' what I's doin', boss."

"I wish I had a torch, Whitewash."

"What fo'?"

"I would take a further look into this slit in the cliff. It seems to widen, farther back, and it may be worth exploring."

"Hi! I guess dis heah am de bery thing you's wushin' fo', boss," as he stooped and looked at something close to the wall. "So it am, too, shua's yo' bo'n!"

"A torch?"

"Dat's jis' what it am."

"Good enough! I will explore the place."

Dick slipped out of the saddle and walked to where his man was standing and picked up the object indicated.

It proved to be what Washington had surmised, a torch. At any rate, it had at some time or other been made to answer the place of one, for its larger end was charred.

Dick tried a match or two on it, and presently succeeded in making it burn, so dry was the resinous wood. And, when it got fairly started, it gave out a good light, to say nothing about the quality and quantity of its smoke. It was not an electric light, by any means, but it would do.

"Mind the horses a few minutes, Whitewash," ordered Dick, "and I will see what kind of a hole we are in."

"All right, sah; you am de boss of dis convention."

Dick pressed past his own noble horse and on into the depths of the rock rift.

The split grew wider as he advanced, and ere long, on turning a slight bend, he came into a roomy space, beyond which was only a tunnel-like hole.

Dick stopped to examine the place, without any intention of exploring further, at that time, for the torch was proof that others had been there before him, and as he looked about he suddenly started.

And no wonder!

On the floor, on the right-hand side of the cavern, lay the body of a man!

"Hello! What have we here?" Dick asked himself, and immediately advanced to where the body lay and scrutinized it closely.

It was the body of a man about thirty

years of age, as Dick decided, and it was falling into decay, proof that it had been there some little time, perhaps a month.

Under the dead man's head was a bag, which, on feeling of it, Dick decided contained hay. This discovery led his mind at once to the carcass of the horse that had been found only a little while before, and Dick immediately associated the one with the other.

"Something wrong here," he inferred. "I must investigate."

He stooped and examined the dead man's pockets, but not a thing was to be found.

Nor was there anything on the floor of the cavern that would throw any light upon the mystery, and Dick Bristol was puzzled, for he had found that the man had been shot.

There was a bullet hole in his left side, showing plainly the cause of his death.

Dick stood up, wondering who the man could have been, and while he was thus thinking, at the same time looking around for a solution, something caught his eye.

He wondered that he had not seen it before, it was now so plain. On the wall, just above where the dead man lay, was an inscription cut into the stone—which was of a soft quality, and Dick leaned eagerly forward to make out the words and learn their import.

CHAPTER III.

ANOTHER MEETING.

No artist's hand had done the lettering.

The letters were irregular and poorly formed, and it required some effort to make out the words.

This, however, did not long baffle Deadwood Dick. He soon caught the sense of the whole, and after that the details were easily mastered. The inscription was this:

VENGEANCE FOR A FOUL CRIME

ACCOMPLISHED AT LAST!

MORGAN MANSFIELD

MEETS HIS MERITED DOOM.

"Morgan Mansfield!" exclaimed the detective. "Then I have journeyed hither for naught. Well, no matter; it is some satisfaction to be able to report that the infamous scoundrel is dead, anyhow. I'll go on to Church City and hang up for a few days all the same."

"Hello! Whitewash!"

"Hello, sah!"

"Bring the horses on in here, and we can turn."

"All right, sah; it am jist as you say, sah. Don't like backin' out ob heah, no-how."

"And you will like this scene about as much, I fancy," said Dick to himself, with a grim smile. "Here is something to try his nerve."

In a few moments the negro was on the scene, leading Dick's horse and his own following.

"Heah I is, sah!" he announced.

"All right," and Dick lifted the torch so as to shadow the spot where the dead man lay. "What do you think of this place?"

"It am good enough to git into when it rains," averred Whitewash, "but a mighty bad place to stay when de sun am shiniu', I done tol' yo'. Come, le's mosey out ob heah."

"All right, in a minute. Here is something I want to show you, Whitewash—an interesting find."

"What am it, sah?"

"Come here and see."

The black obeyed, approaching with a half frightened look on his sable countenance.

As soon as he came within reach, Dick caught him by the shoulder and swung him around, at the same time allowing the light to fall upon the dead man at their feet.

"What do you think of that?"

"Whoo-oo!"

With a yell of fright the negro jerked away and leaped back a couple of yards.

"What's the matter?" demanded the amused detective.

"Yo' wan' to scare de seben senses out ob dis chil'?" cried the black.

"Why, he is dead, Whitewash; he can't hurt you. Come up here and see if you know him."

"I know he am dead, sah; dat's jis' what's de mattah. I wouldn't go so close to him erg'in for two dollars, now mind I tol' you."

"Step up there, you idiot! I want to see if you know him."

The negro plucked up courage to draw a foot or two nearer, but no mild persuasion could induce him to approach closer than that.

"Do you know the man?" asked Dick.

"Fo' de Lawd, Mars Dick, I couldn't be shua."

"Does it look like somebody you have seen, then?"

"Hit do, shua."

"Well, whom?"

"Hit do look mighty like Morg Mansfield, dat used to hold out in Church City, dat am de tru'i, sah."

"Can you swear that it is his body?"

"Well, no, sah, couldn't quite do dat, but I kin sweah dat I fink it is, all de same."

"That is near enough, then. It is Morgan Mansfield, Washington, and it looks as if we have had our trip here for nothing. But, we'll go on, and you will get your pay just the same."

"Golly! dis heah chil' ain't a heap sorry, sah!"

"Sorry for what?"

"Dat he am dead."

"Why?"

"Cause, I would a heap sooner sight meet him dead dan I would alibe, mind I tol' you."

"And it was bad enough to meet him dead, eh? Ha! ha!"

"Dat's what it was, sah—mighty bad sign."

"Well, that's all I wanted of you. We'll go on our way, and you will make no mention of this find to any one. You understand? It is our secret."

"All right, sah, if you say so; I understand dat mum's de word."

"Yes, mum's the order. Mount your charger, now, and follow me out."

"No, guess not, sah. If it am all de same to you, I will wait till de beast git safe out, fust."

"Well, do as you please about that, but come on."

Dick threw himself lightly into the saddle and started out, Whitewash coming after him on foot, leading his horse.

At the opening, Dick's sure-footed animal easily turned the angle and started upon the trail, but Whitewash came out backward with every precaution.

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Dick, stopping and looking back at him. "Have you lost all of your nerve?"

"No, sah, but I ain' gwine to take no chances, you bet! I don't wan' my bones to bleach down dar on de rocks wid dat ol' hoss, I 'sure you."

"Which same horse must have been the rascal's, I take it."

"Not a doubt ob it, sah."

"And it was shot and shoved over the ledge. To me, now, the whole tragedy appears plain enough."

"You fink, den, dat Morg Mansfield was shot, too, like his hoss?"

"Yes, he was shot, and there was an inscription cut in the wall over the body setting forth that the hand of vengeance had overtaken him. Somebody has brought him to account."

"Dat settles him, den, an a mighty good settle it was!"

"And also our business here is settled. But, that does not matter to you, as I said. Your pay will go on just the same. Mind, no mention of the body in the cavern—"

"Hi! Whooap! Look out, sah!"

Dick had been looking back, while speaking, and even before the first word fell from the black's lips the sudden dilation of his eyes gave Dick the warning to look the other way, which he did, just as Whitewash shouted.

They were coming to the bend where they had met Schloss, and another horse and rider had just appeared!

This time, however, it was a young woman instead of a man.

Dick drew rein and doffed his hat.

"The very thing I dreaded has happened," exclaimed the young woman, in a rich, ringing voice. "The thought was just in my mind, what if I should meet some one in this dreadful place?"

"Fo de Lawd! What we gwine do now?" Dick heard Whitewash exclaim, sotto voce.

"Have no fears, lady," encouraged Dick, with all his inborn chivalry. "We had a similar meeting on this very ledge only a little while ago, and you see we are safe and sound—"

"Yes, but the other?" she smilingly inquired.

"We sent him on his way rejoicing."

"Then there is hope for me."

"Assuredly, lady."

"But, yo' can't nebber turn whar yo' am now, like yo' did before," declared Whitewash.

"Maybe not, my calla lily, but we can back down to the opening to the cavern and let the lady pass us there. Go ahead backward!"

"That reminds me," said the young woman, suddenly. "What were you saying, sir, about a body in a cavern, at the moment when we met? Your words awakened my interest."

CHAPTER IV.

RETURN TO THE CAVERN.

Dick Bristol thought quickly.

Her words proved that she had indeed overheard, and he knew he might as well inform her fully.

But, her last remark—why should his words awaken her interest? Perhaps it was only a casual interest, such as any one would feel on hearing such a statement.

He would see and know.

"It is something that you will be the better off for not knowing," he made response.

"Am I not the better judge of that?" she asked him.

"I think not. It certainly cannot interest you, and will only give you a picture of the horrible to dwell upon. You had better let your mere curiosity go unsatisfied."

"My mere curiosity? How do you know it is that only?"

"I guess at it."

"Guesses are not to be relied upon. I urge you to tell me the facts, whatever they may be. You were just cautioning your man to make no mention of the body in the cavern. What body—what cavern? I assure you it is more than idle curiosity prompts me."

"Well, I will tell you, if you insist, certainly."

"I do insist, sir."

"Then you shall know."

Thereupon the detective gave the simple facts of the case, noting their effect upon the woman.

She had been pale from the first, and her eyes were wide with interest throughout. When he mentioned, last of all, the dead man's name, she gave a start, exclaiming:

"Morgan Mansfield?"

"The same. That was the name cut on the rock."

"The very man for whom I have been searching!"

"You have been searching for him?"

"Yes; searching for Morgan Mansfield."

"For what purpose, may I ask?"

"To slay him! Some one has robbed me of the vengeance that was justly mine," and the woman spoke with vicious vim.

"This grows interesting," observed Dick. "Now that I have obliged you in telling you what you demanded to know, will you oblige me by answering a few questions in return?"

"If they are such as I may properly answer."

"Why did you desire to kill Morgan Mansfield?"

"Because he killed my dear and only brother, sir," sadly.

"Reason enough, assuredly, madam. Have you any objection to telling your name?"

"It is Myrtle McLean."

"And your brother's?"

"Nathan McLean."

"Is there any one else besides yourself who would seek to avenge his death, think you, Miss McLean?"

"I know of no one."

"Nathan was not married, then?"

"No."

"Nor engaged?"

"No."

"Why did Mansfield kill him?"

"Before I enter into the particulars of that, sir, it is only fair that I should know to whom I am talking."

"That is true, and I beg your pardon. My name is Richard M. Bristol. I am better known as Deadwood Dick, Jr., however—"

"Deadwood Dick, the detective?"

"That is who I am, miss."

"Thank heaven, I have found you at last!"

"Ah! then you have been in quest of me? That being the case, I am doubly glad we have met."

"Yes, I desired to find you, for I knew that you would aid me in my search for so great a villain. I was informed that you were somewhere in the wilds of Mexico, however, and so gave you up."

"So I was, not a great while ago. I am never long in one place. Now, to my question."

"I will answer it, and fully, if it will still be of interest to you: Mansfield was my lover, and I was engaged to marry him. My brother learned the truth about him, exposed the man, and in his rage, Mansfield killed him."

"That being the case, I am more than ever pleased that we have met as we have."

"Why, Mr. Bristol?"

"Because, you will be able to identify the body beyond any doubt—not that there can be much doubt as it is."

"Yes, yes, I will know him. Take me to the place."

"I will do so. Now, Washington, you will have to back your horse down past that entrance. I know you did not like to do it for the Dutchman, but for a lady it ought to be a pleasure."

"Yes, sah, so it am!" responded Whitewash, showing his white teeth as he grinned. "So it am, sah, wen dar's a lady in de case."

"You say a Dutchman?" asked Miss McLean.

"Yes, the man I told you we met here a little while before we met you."

"A short, fat man, with a round face and a very broad dialect?"

"The same, not a doubt. Gave his name as William Schloss—'Vilhelm,' as he spoke it."

"Yes, that is he! He is from Church City, and there is something about the man that I do not understand. But, sir, you are not looking where your horse is backing!"

"I trust that all to my horse. You see he is looking where he steps every time."

"But it makes my blood run cold."

"Golly! dat ain' nuffin', missy!" spoke up the black. "You jis' order seen dat dar hoss turn on his two hin' legs, a spell ago!"

"Turned! Not here?"

"Right back dar on dat p'int, shua's yo, bo'n."

"Never mind about that, my calla lily; you attend to what you are doing now," chided Dick.

"Dat's jis' what I's doin', sah."

"You say there is something about Schloss that you do not understand?" Dick queried.

The young woman was following him up as he backed along the trail, and their horses were head to head.

"Yes, something that I do not understand."

"What is it?"

"Well, now, if I knew that—"

"I mean, what about him that impresses you?"

"Why, I cannot get it out of my head that he is not what he seems."

"I shall be surprised if he isn't. Hasn't he a wife and children at Church City?"

"Yes, that is true, and yet— But, I don't know what I mean; I should not have mentioned it, perhaps."

"Well, you think no harm of him?"

"No, no; it was not that. I know nothing to his hurt."

"Heah we am, sah!" An announcement from Whitewash ended their conversation for the time being.

"I will back past the opening, too," explained Bristol, "and you ride straight in, Miss McLean. The footing is sure, and you need have no fear. I will follow right after you."

"I might hesitate were it any one else than Deadwood Dick."

Dick lifted his hat.

"I will have a light in a few moments," he said, "then we shall be able to see our way. Whitewash, leave your horse there and find that torch for me."

"Yes, sah; dat I will, sah!"

"Wait where you are, Miss McLean, until the brand is lighted."

The young woman stopped where she was, and in a few minutes the torch had been found and lighted. Then they proceeded, she and Dick, leaving the black to await their return.

CHAPTER V.

PROVIDENCE DIRECTING.

Myrtle McLean was ahead, Dick following close behind her, bearing the torch.

"What a narrow, dismal place it is!" the young woman exclaimed, after a moment of silence.

"Not very delightful, that is true," agreed Dick.

"And you are quite sure of the footing? The shadow of my horse falls directly ahead."

"It is perfectly safe, as I told you. I rode in here and out again only a few minutes ago. It will widen presently."

So it did, and as soon as it was possible, Dick rode forward and placed his horse alongside that of the young woman, on the right-hand side. She could then see the footing ahead.

But Dick had another purpose in this. He did not want her to come too suddenly upon the shocking sight that awaited them.

"Are you of good nerve?" he inquired.

"I am acquiring a nerve here in the West," she answered.

"You will need it for what you are about to behold in here," he declared.

"I am prepared."

Then came the rock chamber, and the girl looked hurriedly around as soon as they entered.

For a moment Dick purposely shadowed the spot where the body lay, till Myrtle looked at him in a questioning manner, when he allowed the light to fall upon the remains.

"Do you recognize the man?" Dick asked.

She gave a start.

"Death makes a terrible change in any one," she answered, looking.

"That is true. Will you dismount, Miss McLean?"

"Yes, I think I will. I must be sure in the matter, and I think I can be."

Dick vaulted out of the saddle instantly and gave her his hand, and she leaped lightly to the ground.

She took the torch from his hand, and bending over the body she studied the face with great care for some minutes, when she shook her head.

"You do not recognize him?" asked Dick.

"I do, and I do not, sir. Yet, it must be Morgan Mansfield."

"There can be scarcely a doubt on that point, I think," assumed her companion. "See the inscription here!"

She stood up and held the light so that she could see it plainly, and after a few moments was able to make it out. Further proof seemed superfluous.

"What do you think?" asked Dick.

"I think there is scarcely room for doubt."

"Yet you do not recognize the face to a certainty?"

"No, I do not."

"Does it look like Mansfield?"

"Oh! yes, it looks like him. It must be that death has wrought the change."

"That, and the decay together," said Dick. "I think it is now only a question of who killed him."

"You would like to know that?"

"Yes, I would."

"Why?"

"Well, partly out of curiosity, partly in the way of business."

"Then you—"

"Like you, I came here in quest of Morgan Mansfield, and I would like to return positive proofs that this was he."

"Well, I think it is hardly necessary

to look for further proof, all things considered. This wording on the wall, and the resemblance together— Ugh! I feel it!"

She spurned the body with her foot, while a shiver seized her.

"Then your love has turned to hate."

"Mercy! Why would it not? He was basely deceiving me, and then he killed my dear brother, the last and only dear friend I had in the world."

"Yet, for all, your recognition is not positive?"

"I was looking for too close a resemblance to Morgan Mansfield as I knew him, sir. He had side whiskers when I knew him, while here he has only a mustache."

"Then you could hardly hope to make a positive recognition, unless you knew of some mark upon his body."

"I knew of none."

"Then there is nothing for us to do but accept this as the body of Morgan Mansfield. I think there can be no mistake about it, for my man recognized the face."

"Your man?"

"That chunk of charcoal we left outside there."

"Oh; then he knew him?"

"Yes, that is the reason he is along with me. I picked him up, after some trouble, trying to find some one who could recognize the rascal at sight."

"And he recognized this body, you say?"

"Yes."

"Then of course there can be no mistake. Ugh!" with another spurn with her foot. "I only wish that some life remained in his foul carcass, that I might take it!"

Her hatred was intense, as Dick recognized, but he did not wonder.

"Feel satisfied that he has met his merited doom, as this inscription tells us," he said.

"Yes, it is some satisfaction, but, like you, I now desire to learn who his foe was, and thank him for the service rendered me."

"Or her," Dick suggested.

"Ah! you may be right; I did not think of that."

"Shall I help you to mount?"

"If you please."

Dick rendered her the required service, and then sprang nimbly upon his own horse.

"Now," he directed, "you go first, but stop at the opening until Whitewash leads his horse past out of your way, so you can continue—"

"Your pardon, but I shall now return to Church City, if you will permit me to ride in your company."

"Permit you! It will be a great pleasure, I assure you, miss."

"Thank you, Mr. Bristol."

"Don't mention thanks, when they are all due from me," Dick rejoined, starting forward. "Follow close after me."

He had again taken the torch, and he held it so that she could see her way as they proceeded through the passage to the opening, where he shook out the flame and cast the stick to the ground.

"We will leave that for the next explorer," he said, with a light laugh. "Are you there, my calla lily?"

"Yes, sah."

"All right, get aboard your bunch of bones and bring up the rear."

"Yo' look 'e heah, sah, don't yo' go to consultin' me, callin' dis heah hoss a bunch ob bones, 'cause I won't stan' it."

"Well, I take it back," said Dick, while Myrtle laughed merrily.

Dick led the way, and in the order mentioned they rounded the corner where Dick had made the daring turn and continued on until the dangerous ledge had been left behind them.

As soon as the way permitted, Dick dropped back by Myrtle's side.

"Then you were only out for a little exercise, I take it, seeing that you had no objective point in view," he remarked.

"I had an objective point in view, however, sir, which, to confess the truth, I had forgotten all about until this moment, when you bring it to my mind. But, no matter."

"May I ask where you were going?"

"Merely to that ledge, sir, and home again."

"Then you had heard something of the cavern and the—"

"Not a word, but I had heard of a horse that lay there among the rocks, as if it had fallen from the trail, and—"

She paused.

"And what?" Dick inquired.

"Well, I hardly know," she said.

"Something seemed to tell me to come here; somehow I was impressed with the idea that the dead horse had something to do with Morgan Mansfield, and that by means of it I should be led to him."

"Providence again," said Deadwood Dick, reverently, in low tone.

CHAPTER VI.

BULLET AND BILLET.

They were going on at a leisurely gait, chatting, when suddenly, at an abrupt bend in the trail, they came head to head with another horseman.

All drew rein quickly, and the newcomer upon the scene promptly lifted his hat out of respect to the young lady. He was well dressed, and wore a chin whisker, his lip and cheeks being clean shaven.

His skin was dark, and there was a noticeable scar on one side of his face, as if he had at some time received a deep cut. The scar was merely a line, and, while it could not be concealed entirely, it might have been partly hidden by a full beard.

"Ah! I meet you returning, Miss McLean," he said.

"Yes, Mr. Druce, and in distinguished company, too," was the response.

"Indeed! Pray introduce me, then."

"With pleasure. Let me make you known to Mr. Richard Bristol, better known as Deadwood Dick, Junior."

"Is it possible!"

"Mr. Bristol, this is Mr. Robert Druce, a wealthy resident of Church City."

"I am pleased to know you, sir," said Dick, extending his hand in his frank and hearty manner. "I take it for granted that you came out purposely to be company for Miss McLean."

"And I am more than delighted to meet and know you, Deadwood Dick," said the other, with a firm grasp of the hand. "Now that you are here, it is just possible that you will be able to render Miss McLean a great service that will come right in your line."

"He has already promised to do so, Mr. Druce."

"Ah! then you have told him your story?"

"Yes, and that is not half. We have found that Morgan Mansfield is dead."

"Dead!"

"Yes."

"You amaze me. You, sir, have told her this, I believe," speaking to Dick.

As briefly as possible Dick told about the finding of the dead body in the cavern, and the inscription on the wall.

"You more than amaze me," declared

the man. "I must ride on and see for myself. Miss McLean, you will pardon my rudeness if I do not turn back with you, I trust, eh?"

"Why, certainly, Mr. Druce."

"You see, I saw you set out this way for a ride, and I thought I would steal after you and enjoy a little of the sunshine of your—"

"There, there, Mr. Druce, go along and see your dead man—"

"Let me finish. I was going to add—knowing the dangers of the ledge trail, I made haste as soon as I learned that you had turned in this direction. I hope you will excuse—"

"With pleasure, Mr. Druce, I assure you."

"And you, Mr. Bristol, I hope to see more of you, if you are going to stop at Church City."

"No doubt you will, sir, for I expect to hang up my hat there for a day or two, at least. By the way, did you know Morgan Mansfield?"

"No; why do you ask that?"

"Because, I wanted you to say whether you think this body his or not, was all."

"But, you have told me that it is."

"Yes, and it is," assured Myrtle.

"No, I had never seen the man," said Druce. "I had never heard of such a man till Miss McLean came to Church City inquiring for him."

The young woman was edging away, as if eager to end the matter, and Dick cut further talk short.

"Well, I will see you later," he said, with a wave of the hand to the man.

So they parted, and Dick rode side by side with Miss McLean as before. Glancing back at Druce, they saw that he was watching them with no pleasant expression.

He quickly turned his face away, and galloped off.

"A good friend of yours, I take it," said Dick.

"He may be, I don't know," was the answer.

"You need not tell me anything," said Dick. "I see the whole situation. I read it in the stars."

"Stars in daylight!"

"Just the same as if they were visible, then."

"Well, it is true; he is pestering me with his attentions all the time."

"And you are not altogether opposed to them, I read that also," said Dick, further, with a smile. "Not a bad-looking man by any means."

"But, if he only knew how I detest chin whiskers!"

"Ha! ha!" laughed Dick. "If that is all, I shall have to give him the hint."

"You will do nothing of the kind, Mr. Bristol! Let me see, what were we talking about before the interruption?"

Dick saw that she was eager to get away from the subject, and he put nothing in the way of her doing so.

"You were about telling me the last words Morgan Mansfield said to you," he said.

"Yes, that was it; now I remember."

"And what were they?"

"It was after I had been apprised of his true character, and at the time when I turned him away from me with utter contempt. He said:

"You shall yet be mine, Myrtle McLean; I swear it. You cast me off now, because somebody has lied about me, but I will have you in spite of all. As for that brother of yours, I will attend to him, too. You need not tell me who told you the stuff."

"And it was the next morning that your brother was found murdered?"

"Yes."

"And you only suspected Mansfield from the fact of his having made that threat?"

"No, no; I found proofs; so did others. More than that, there were witnesses to the crime—two boys, who ran away in fear of their lives. They had seen the two men fighting."

"And your brother was found murdered, and Morgan Mansfield was gone?"

"Yes. He was the man who did it."

"And the proofs?"

She named them, some articles known to have belonged to Mansfield that were discovered near the scene of the crime.

"It appears, then, that it was a fight between them, and not altogether a murder, after all," said Dick.

"No, no; it was a murder, sir. My brother fought in defense of his life, but he was no match for Mansfield. And then when his true character was known, that was enough."

"Yes, no doubt you are right, there. But, a question just here."

"What is it?"

"How did you know that the object of your vengeance was in this locality?"

"I had a letter from the wretch, protesting his innocence of any part in my brother's death, and it came from this camp of Church City. Think of that, when it was all so plain."

"And you came openly here?"

"No; I came in disguise, at first, but he was not to be found, and I have thrown off the disguise now."

"You had despaired of ever finding him, then?"

"I was losing heart."

"Well, well, there appears to be a good deal of mystery about the matter, Miss McLean. I am more than ever eager to get to the bottom of it."

"I hope you will be able to do so, sir."

"By the way, how long ago was that letter sent to you?"

"More than four months ago, now, sir. I have been here nearly three months."

Dick was about to question further, but at that moment the sharp report of a pistol rang out upon the air, and without a word or moan Deadwood Dick reeled and tumbled out of the saddle.

The same shot had cut away a ringlet of Myrtle McLean's hair in its passage!

CHAPTER VII.

MYSTERY OF THE MATTER.

The young woman uttered a piercing shriek, and her horse reared with her as she tightened upon the rein.

"Good Lawd!" cried Washington White, tumbling out of the saddle and running to his master. "He am done killed, miss, done killed dead fo' shua!"

"You can do him no good, then," said the young woman, recovering her nerve quickly. "Find the man who killed him, and put a bullet through his vile heart before he can escape!"

But, whence had the shot come?

The negro got up and looked around, a pistol in hand, but no one was to be seen.

"Fo' de Lawd, I'se done puzzled," he declared. "Whar did dat shot come from, anyhow? Dar ain' no one in sight, missy."

"You are afraid to look," cried the girl, wheeling her horse around to the right and making her way among some bowlders that lay at the foot of a rocky cliff.

She, too, had her pistol in her hand.

"You look out yo' don' git a dose ob de same medicine," cautioned the black.

"You follow me," was the girl's sharp

order, "or I will shoot you in your tracks! That man must not escape us, and I know he is here somewhere!"

She had turned suddenly and drawn a bead upon Whitewash.

"Hol' on!" he cried out in a hurry. "Fo' Gawd's sake don't shoot, an' I be dar in jes' two jumps! I show yo' dat I ain' 'fraid ob nawthin', dat's what I show yo'!"

And he went scrambling over the rocks in a hurry, where it was impossible for a horse to go.

For some moments they searched bravely.

Their lives were in danger, but the girl appeared not to think of that.

As for the negro, he had been forced into it, and he was making a shining virtue of grim necessity.

"Where can he have escaped to?" the young woman presently stopped to question. "He is not here; yet I am sure he did not go away from here after firing."

"Guess dat am so, missy."

"And the shot came from this direction."

"Et shua did, missy."

"But, where is the man? That is the point."

"He ain't heah, dat am sartain, fo' I kin see ebery part ob de place from dis heah rock."

Not satisfied, the young woman dismounted and hastened to the point where the negro was standing, and looked around in every direction.

It was a mystery.

The person who had fired the shot had utterly disappeared.

There was absolutely no place where he could be concealed, for they had gone around the entire cluster of bowlders.

Moreover, their position commanded a full view, as the negro had declared, and it had been utterly impossible for the man to have made his escape without being seen.

The shot had come from that side.

It had come from the direction of the bowlders, and behind the bowlders rose the cliff.

The cliff was not far from the trail, a stone could have been thrown to it with ease, and the space in front was open, save for the bowlders.

On the other side a gentle slope led away to a creek.

"What can it mean?" questioned the young woman.

"Gib it up, missy," responded Whitewash.

"Who knew your master was coming here?"

"Nobody as I knows ob, missy."

"But, some one has killed him. Why?"

"Gib dat right up widout tryin'."

"But, you mustn't give it up! You must help me to find his slayer and avenge his death!"

"Yo' kin jes' bet yo' las' dollar dat is jes' what dis heah nigger would like to do, missy; but how am we gwine to do it when we don' know whar to look fo' him?"

"I am bewildered."

"I's a wuss'n dat, a heap sight, missy."

Another period of silent, eager scanning all around, fruitlessly.

"Come, dis heah ain' no use," said Whitewash, then. "We ain' gwine to find him dis way."

"But, he must be found—"

"Dat am all right, missy. Mebby he purty soon find us, with another bullet, if we don' look cut. We's fine targets up heah, we am, and I hab had 'bout nuff."

"Then you are afraid—"

"'Fraid ob nothin'! You fink I be standin' up heah, if I was 'fraid? I guess

not. Done dis jes' to prove to you dat I don't scar' wuff a cent. But, we must see to de boss."

"Ha! so we must. Let us hasten."

The girl was down from off the bowlder in a moment, and was running in the direction of the spot where Dick lay.

"I hope he is not dead. Oh! I hope he is not dead!" she cried.

"But I'se 'fraid he is," said Whitewash, who had just at the moment caught up with her.

"No! no! See!"

Dick had lifted his arm and placed his hand to his head.

"De good Lawd be praised!" cried Whitewash, fervently. "Glory! but I done fink he was a goner!"

He ran the faster, and was the first to reach Dick's side.

Myrtle came up the next moment.

"Boss, am yo' 'live?" cried the negro, joyously.

"Are you badly hurt, Mr. Bristol?"

Dick was rubbing his head in a feeble, half-dazed manner, and did not reply at once.

The young woman sat down and took his head upon her lap.

"Get some water," she ordered.

The negro snatched off his hat and ran with all speed in the direction of the creek at once.

The girl rubbed Dick's forehead with her hand, calling his name as she did so, at the same time trying to discover where he was wounded, for she could find no blood.

Presently she discovered it, a large lump under his heavy hair.

Then she picked up his hat.

"Ha! it was this steel buckle that saved his life!" she said, half aloud. "Only for it, he would have been killed instantly."

"Where am I?" asked Dick, feebly.

He opened his eyes.

"You are all right, sir," she told him.

"Some wretch shot at you and you would have been killed had it not been for the buckle on your hat."

"Dat's jes' what yo' would, shua," declared Whitewash, running up with his hat full of water. "But, you wait till we souses you wid dis water, and den you be all right, I 'pine."

The negro held the water while the young woman bathed Dick's face, and after a few moments more Dick's mind and strength began to recover rapidly.

He was then soon able to sit up.

"So, some one tried a shot at me?" he mused. "Did you get sight of the gentleman?"

He was told how mysterious the shot had been, and of their fruitless search for the man who had fired it.

"This is strange, very strange," Dick said, musing. "You are sure it came from that side of the trail?"

"Yes, it came from there, and was not far away."

"That must be so, for this lump is on that side, and I was riding in that direction," indicating.

He mused silently for a few minutes, and got upon his feet. He staggered at first, but was able to stand, and his horse came and rubbed its nose against him and gave a whinny.

Dick caressed the animal while he surveyed the scene and studied the situation.

Presently he said:

"Miss McLean, thank your lucky stars that that bullet found the wrong target. That shot was fired at you; there is no doubting it."

She looked at him in greatest consternation.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHO FIRED THE "

It was something that almost took away the young woman's breath.

She had not thought of it in that light, though now she recalled how very close the bullet had come to her own head.

"You cannot mean it!" she exclaimed.

"There is no room to doubt it," Dick declared.

"What is your proof?"

"Why, you were on that side, and in order to fire at me the assassin would have had to endanger your life."

"He may have taken the risk."

"Doubtful, for you must have been in almost direct line with me. Did the bullet touch your hair?"

"I believe it did."

"And I know it did. There is a ringlet lying on your shoulder, held only by a hair or two, in proof."

He picked it up as he spoke.

He was now rapidly recovering from the effect of the shot.

She paled at sight of it.

"Golly! but dat dar was a clus call!" cried Whitewash. "Jes' a little mo', missy, an' yo' nebber knowed what done hit ye."

"But, I cannot agree with you, sir," she said to Dick, without noticing the remark made by Whitewash. "Why should any one want to put me out of the way, let me ask you."

"It is for you to answer that, miss."

"Well, then, I cannot answer it, for I do not know."

"You have no enemy?"

"Not to my knowledge. Certainly not one who would seek to murder me in that fashion."

"Yet it is plain that some one did try it."

"Still I cannot agree with you. Why was it not tried again, when the first shot missed me? No, Deadwood Dick though you are, you are wrong."

"Well, I must let you have your opinion while I hold fast to mine. I mean to know more about this matter before I leave Church City. Remain here while I take a look around."

"You will discover nothing."

"How do you know that?"

"Because I and your man have looked."

Dick smiled.

"Deed dat am so, boss," declared Whitewash. "Nuffin' to be seed out dar."

Nevertheless, Deadwood Dick wanted to see for himself, and he went among the bowlders, carrying a gun in his hand ready for instant use if needed.

He made a search even more thorough than the others had done, but he met with the same lack of success. He was unable to discover a single thing that pointed to a clew. He was nonplussed.

There was a puzzled look on his face when he returned.

"Did I not tell you so?" asked Miss McLean.

"Yes, and I have to admit that you knew, too."

"What yo' fink 'bout sich business, anyhow, boss?"

"I am getting past thinking, Whitewash. Say, didn't you notice smoke when the shot was fired?"

"Dat's what I did, boss."

"Where was it?"

"Dar wasn't a hull lot ob it, but it was right out dar toward de face ob de cliff, sah."

"It is strange that no one was to be seen—stranger still that no tracks are to be found, for the ground there leaves our own plainly visible. Hello! here comes our Teutonic friend again."

"It is Schloss!" exclaimed the young woman.

"Yes, exactly, on his mule Vilhelm Pismarck," said Dick.

"You remember what I told you, sir?"

"And you said you thought no evil of the man."

"But, he may have fired the shot. He may be an enemy of yours."

"Not so, for I tell you that shot was fired at you. However, no word about it to him. Hello, Deutscher!"

"Wie gehts!" responded the German, drawing rein. "Vhat you vas doing here mit yourselves anyhow, ain't id? Vhy for you ain't all der vay mit Church City, already?"

"Oh, we stopped to take a rest," said Dick.

"Vell, if you vas rested, subbose ve go along in company, eh? I ain't ashamed of you if you ain't ashamed mit me."

"Be glad to go in your company, sir. You made a quick trip, didn't you? Seems only a little while ago since we met you on the cliff trail."

"Yaw, yaw, I cooms pooty gwick ven I vas on der home stretch, you pet me. Vilhelm Pismarck yust put in his pig licks, den, unt see how gwick he git him mit his stable in."

"Sensible mule. But, did you meet anybody else on the trail?"

"No, unt by ching I vas not sorry! I meet me too much vhen I meets me mit you on dot places."

"Did you not meet Mr. Druce?" asked Myrtle, in some surprise.

"Nein, ich habe ihn nicht gesehen—"

"Bless me, Mr. Schloss, I do not speak German!" cried the girl, with a laugh.

"Vell, vell, vhat I dinks me apoudt, anyvay. Id vas yust as easy for me to speak English, vhen I talk him so good, ain't id?"

"Well, what did you say?"

"I told you dot I hadn't seen him, dot vas all."

"Not seen him!"

The young woman looked at Dick.

"No, not von hair mit his head or von crown mit his feet—I mean me von sole mit his crown."

"This is strange," said Dick, speaking earnestly. "Mr. Druce went along here not a great while ago. Didn't you notice the tracks of his horse?"

"I paid not much attention 'pout dot."

"Well, it is strange. Still, he must have been in the cavern, for he was going there. Are you ready?"

"Hol' on, boss, speak ob de ol' debbil an' yo's boun' ter see him, fo' shua. Hyar comes dat bery pusson, dis minnit!"

He pointed.

Sure enough, there came Druce.

They waited for him to come up, and he was soon with them.

"Why, this is a pleasure I did not dream of," he said, when he drew rein. "You have evidently been loitering."

"That is the case, but we were about going on," said Dick. "It will be an honor to ride into town with you, to say nothing about Mr. Schloss here. Let us move on."

They had mounted, and now proceeded on their way.

Dick noted that a smile played over Druce's lips at mention of the honor of riding in Schloss's company.

"By the way, did you find the body?" Dick presently asked.

"Yes, I found it."

"What is your opinion, then?"

"The matter admits of but one, sir."

"And that is—"

"That the outlaw has met the fate he no doubt merited."

"Vhat vas dot?" quickly asked

Schloss. "Vhat vas dot you vas talking apoudt?"

He was told.

"Py ching!" he cried. "Vas dot so?"

They assured him that it was, and he seemed to grow excited.

"I have von notion to turn me rightt about face unt go pack there und see him," he cried.

"It won't be worth your while, now," said Druce. "Our mayor will no doubt send out and have the body brought to Church City, where everybody will be able to see it."

Their talk ran on, Schloss prattling away and affording a good deal of amusement for the others at times, and in due season they reached their destination. As they rode into town, however, it was noticed that there was a considerable stir of excitement.

The day had opened strong for Deadwood Dick and his colored pard, but they were destined to further and greater exciting experiences here.

The crowd seemed to be gathered in front of the leading hotel.

CHAPTER IX.

A CRIME IN CHURCH CITY.

Church City needs no description.

It was your typical Western mining town in all respects.

The mentioned leading hotel was the Crossman House, a quite reputable hostelry.

It was in front of this building, as said, that the crowd was congregated, and suppressed excitement prevailed.

"Hello!" exclaimed Schloss. "Vhat gone und got busted here?"

"Something is amiss, that is evident," said Druce.

"What can it be?" queried Miss McLean.

"Remains to be seen, Miss Myrtle," said Druce. "It is something out of the usual, that is plain."

"And it is in your house."

"Seems to be."

Robert Druce was the owner of the Crossman House.

They rode on down the slope into the gulch and into the street of the camp.

Dick had dropped back, his horse having capered up (under his touch) and given him an excuse, and he spoke to his man Whitewash.

"Now, you keep your eyes and ears open, Whitewash," he said in low tones. "I feel it in my bones that there is going to be music in the air before we are much older."

"All right, boss, you will find me hyar when de band begins to play, you bet."

"And you remember what I have told you?"

"Bout dem signals?"

"Yes."

"You bet."

"Very well, if I have to make use of any of them, you will know what I require of you."

"Shua."

Needless to explain.

Whoever was Dick's aid at any time, a code of signals was always arranged.

His horse having become quiet, Dick rode forward again and took his place beside Myrtle, Druce being on the other side of her, and in this order they rode up.

"What is the excitement, Mayor Hogan?" asked Druce.

A big, burly, whiskered man turned instantly at the question, and ran his eyes over the little company.

"Why, a murder has been done here, that is what," he answered.

"A murder?"

"Yes."

"Who is it?"

"George Banks."

Deadwood Dick noted that his eyes turned to Myrtle as he mentioned the name.

The young woman turned deathly pale in an instant.

"Great heavens!"

She gasped the exclamation, and for an instant Dick thought she was going to faint.

He put up his hand to catch her if she fell, but she recovered herself and tightened her hold upon the reins, adding:

"It can't be true."

"No mistake about it, miss; wish there was," said the mayor, kindly.

"Who killed him?"

"That is what is puzzling us."

"What was he to you, Miss McLean?" inquired Dick.

"He was a friend."

"I am greatly pained at hearing this, believe me," said Druce, offering his hand to the girl.

Dick understood by this that the murdered man must have been more than a mere friend to the girl. He inferred that he had been her lover, perhaps.

"Thank you, Mr. Druce," was all she said, touching his hand.

She dismounted.

A man came forward and took her horse, and she entered the house.

"You say you have no clew to the scoundrel who did the deed?" queried Druce.

"Not a clew, Mr. Druce. Can't find a thing."

"Maybe I can be of some use here," said Deadwood Dick.

The mayor looked at him.

"Not a doubt of it," said Druce quickly. "Mayor Hogan, this is Deadwood Dick."

"The mischief!" cried the Mayor.

"Then you are just the man we want at this time. Dismount, sir, and come right into the house with us. Somebody will see to your horse."

Dick slipped out of the saddle and gave the rein to Whitewash.

"Somebody will show you where to put the animals," he said. "I am at your service, Mr. Hogan."

"Right this way, then. Come along, Mr. Druce; you have as much interest in this thing as anybody, seeing the crime was done in your house."

"You make no mistake in saying that," said Druce, who had already dismounted.

"I will show the people that such things cannot happen in my house and the perpetrator go unpunished."

"Unt py cling, I likes me to hafe a hand in der game meinselt," declared Schloss. "Dot young mans vas a frient mit me, unt I likes him, maype. I pet you it go hard mit him if Vilhelm Schloss lay hands on him; id vill, py ching! Yaw, dot vas so."

"Well, come on," the mayor invited.

"Here, sompody dake care mit my Vilhelm Pismarck. By ching, ve find outd who kills Chorch Panks, I pet you!"

Some laughed at the earnestness of the Teuton, and willing hands took charge of his mule and he trotted after Dick, Druce and the mayor, who had by this time reached the piazza.

The hotel was of considerable size, with quite a number of rooms.

It was three stories high.

Men were in the hall, on the piazza, and all around, eagerly discussing the situation.

Some started to follow up stairs, but the proprietor stopped and waved them back, saying:

"Wait a little, boys, and let Deadwood Dick have a chance to look around before you crowd him."

They fell back at once.

The word had already been passed who Dick was.

Every man of them regarded him as an object of greatest curiosity, for he was famous.

Said one man:

"You kin set down fer gospel that Deadwood Dick will have the right pig by the ear before the week is out, pards."

"That's what he will," agreed another. "A feller mought jist as well give right up, when Deadwood Dick gits on his trail. Thar ain't no earthly show fer him."

Some one proposed a cheer for Dick, but the crime was too fresh and too much awe was felt.

Dick, meantime, passed on and was conducted to the room where the murdered man had been discovered, and where his body had been left for the time being.

The door had been closed.

It was Druce who opened the door, and Dick saw him give a start.

"Oh! Mr. Druce!" immediately was heard the voice of Myrtle McLean, in excitement. "He is not dead!"

"Not dead!"

"No, no! Have a doctor sent here at once, I beg!"

Druce was pale, but he turned immediately to the mayor, who was next to him.

"Do you hear?" he said. "Hurry down and start some one for Dawson. He must have been blind or drunk, if he has been here—"

"He hasn't been here," the mayor interrupted. "He has been called out of camp to see a miner's wife just over the ridge. I'll hustle a man after him, all the same."

He hastened away.

Druce entered the room, followed by Dick, and after them came William Schloss, who had just caught up.

On the bed lay the body of the victim of the crime, apparently dead, and kneeling on the floor by his side was Myrtle McLean, with her ear laid on his breast.

CHAPTER

DICK NOTES SOME THINGS.

Deadwood Dick stepped forward immediately.

"You say he is not dead?" he queried.

"Let me see."

"No, no, he is not dead, sir; I have felt his heart flutter."

She rose to her feet and allowed him to take her place by the man's side.

Dick stooped and laid his ear on the thorax, at the same time laying a finger on the pulse at the wrist.

For some seconds there was no indication of life, but there was presently a flutter, as the girl had declared, and the pulse was plainly felt to beat.

Dick rose hastily.

"She is right, Mr. Druce," he said. There was no doubt of it.

"Is he alive?" the man asked. He was somewhat pale, as if the whole matter had unstrung his nerve.

"Yes, and must have aid at once," said Dick. "If that doctor is not to be had, we must do what we can ourselves, until he arrives. Do you know where the wound is, Miss McLean?"

"It is in his back," the girl answered.

She had resumed her place.

"Was he shot?"

"I do not know; they did not tell me—I did not stop to ask any questions, as you know, but came straight here."

"So you did. Mr. Druce, let us have

some brandy here as quick as possible. "The most important thing for us to do is to save the man's life if that be possible."

"Yes, yes, certainly," cried Druce, starting out of a momentary reverie. "I will go for it myself."

"Yaw, yaw, dot vas der peesness," urged Schloss.

"Do hurry, Mr. Druce!"

The young woman laid her hand on his arm and looked up into his face appealingly.

"For your sake," he said, in a low tone, and hastened from the room.

"Now, I told you vhat must pe done," said the Teuton, stepping forward to where Dick stood. "If dot mans is pleading dot must pe stopped—"

"You are right!" cried Dick. "Will you retire, Miss—"

"No, no, my place is here, sir."

"But, we must examine him for the wound, and perhaps your nerve will not be equal to it—"

"I tell you my place is here, because—because I love him. I did not know how well I really did love him till I thought he was dead. Oh! save him if you can, sir!"

"We'll see what can be done."

With that Dick and the German set to work.

Dick was surprised to find how handy Schloss was, and how well he went to work.

They found that the man had been cut in the back, near the right side, and that an ugly wound had been inflicted.

The bedding under him was fairly saturated with his lifeblood, and the wound was still bleeding, though coagulation had in a measure stopped the hemorrhage.

"By heavens! but that was a dirty dig!" cried Dick.

"Yaw, dot's vhat id vas," agreed the Dutchman.

"Do you think he will live?" asked Myrtle, eagerly.

"That is impossible to tell, yet."

"I yust like to know who done der peesness," said Schloss.

"And I intend to know, before I leave this diggings," said Deadwood Dick.

Tearing a strip from the sheet on the bed, he took a piece from that and stuffed it into the gaping cut, and with the aid of Schloss wound the strip around the man's body.

About the time they had done that Druce returned.

Dick thought he had been gone a considerable time on so simple an errand.

The man had a bottle and glass in his hands, and had already poured a little of the liquor out into the tumbler.

"Is he still living?" he asked.

"Yes, yes, hasten," urged the young woman.

He extended the glass to her, and she took it from his hand.

In her haste, though, turning to the bed, she tripped and spilled the brandy.

A smothered imprecation escaped Druce.

"Your pardon!" he said in haste, "but your very haste is making you nervous, Miss McLean."

"Here, let me have the bottle," said Dick, taking it out of his hand. "We will not bother with the glass, now. Let me get there, miss."

Myrtle moved away to make room.

Druce took the glass from her hand.

Deadwood Dick opened the man's lips and poured in a little of the brandy.

While they were waiting to note its effect the door opened and the mayor entered, another man at his heels.

"Here he is," remarked the mayor.

"Dr. Dawson!" exclaimed the young woman. "You must save his life for me, doctor!"

"We'll see, we'll see," from the doctor.

"And you, miss, had better take a thimbleful of this brandy," suggested Dick Bristol. "The glass, please, Mr. Druce."

Druce's face had darkened, when Myrtle made her appeal to the doctor, and his scar was showing more than usually plain. Dick's words roused him, and he offered the glass.

For some reason, the detective was watching him closely.

As Dick was about to take the glass, Druce drew it back and put out his other hand for the bottle.

"Let me have the honor," he requested.

Dick yielded, giving him the bottle.

Druce poured a little of the liquor into the glass. With that he rinsed the glass, throwing the liquor away, and immediately poured a little more, which he handed to Myrtle.

"Take it!" he urged. "You look as if you need it."

The girl took it, and Deadwood Dick turned away with a new light in his eyes.

This was not noticed by any one, and he gave immediate attention to what the doctor was doing to restore respiration.

"What do you think of it?" asked Bristol.

"He may live," answered the doctor. "The fact that there is a spark of life gives hope."

"Thank God!" from Myrtle.

Druce's face grew darker than ever.

"But, he will need constant care," the doctor added.

"And he shall have it, if I have to give it myself," declared Druce. "I am in a measure responsible for this."

"You?" from Myrtle.

Dick looked and listened.

"Yes, for it was to see me that he came here, by appointment."

"I take it that he had an enemy, then," observed Dick, "and we have only to learn who it was."

"It would appear so," assented Druce, "but I was not aware that he had an enemy in the world, were you, Miss McLean?"

"No, I was not."

"You knew him well, then, Mr. Druce?"

"Why, sir, he was superintendent of my mines here in the gulch."

"Ah! now I begin to understand. And you had asked him to come here about some matter of business—"

"And should have sent him word not to come, when I set out to follow Miss McLean on her ride," the man added. "But, I left word here with my man Whitney."

"Who is Whitney?" asked the detective.

"He is the manager of the hotel for me."

"I see, I see. Maybe he can throw some light on the matter."

"By ching!" cried the German, his round face aglow with excitement, "somepodies got to throw some light on der matter, you yust pet you dot vas so! Else dey hear from Vilhelm Schloss!"

CHAPTER XI.

DICK WARNS MYRTLE.

Richard Bristol thought rapidly.

There was a grave suspicion in his mind, one which he could not quiet.

He had no proofs to back it up; it would never do to breathe it yet; but it was there all the same.

Touching Miss McLean on the arm, he drew her to one side.

Robert Druce watched them, as Dick noted, with something like a flame of jealousy in his eyes.

"What do you want?" asked the girl.

"A word with you," returned Dick, in a low tone.

"What is it?"

"Do not appear excited when I tell you, do not look around, do not in any manner draw attention to us."

She looked the amazement she felt.

"What do you mean?" she gasped, in a whisper.

"You love this man Banks, do you not?"

"As you have heard me say. I did not know that I did love him so."

"And you value his life, naturally, loving him?"

"Yes, yes. What are you coming at?"

"I am coming at this: You must not leave him alone, not for a single moment, any time!"

"But, it will be improper for me to remain here all the time; sir, and Mr. Druce has so kindly offered to attend to him or see that he is taken care of—"

"Then you would leave him at the mercy of—his rival?"

The girl gave a violent start.

"You do not think—"

"Which of the two is your choice?" demanded Dick.

"George Banks, by all odds! He loved me, but I was blind to it for a selfish reason, trying to still my own heart."

"What was that reason?"

"He is a poor man, while Druce is very rich."

"Then are you quite sure now that you prefer Banks and will stick to him?"

"Yes, yes, I know it, sir! But, be quick with what you have to tell me, for I know Druce is watching me. I feel his eyes upon me."

"Yes, he is watching us, and he must not suspect what I am saying to you. I have reason to believe that he has already attempted to remove his rival by poison—"

"Great heavens!"

"Take care, or you will give it away! I am only putting you on your guard. You must remain here; you must allow nothing to pass Banks's lips that you do not absolutely know is harmless; and, above all things, you must be watchful of Robert Druce."

"You cannot believe that he—"

"I do believe it, miss, but I cannot prove it, yet. If you value the life of this man, take warning!"

Dick turned abruptly away, and joined Druce.

"It is a mystery," he said. "Miss McLean does not know that the man had an enemy in the world."

"Nor does any one else, I fancy," returned Druce, with a relieved look. "He was a thoroughly good fellow, in all respects, and I thought a deal of him."

"How are we going to get to the bottom of the matter?"

"That is for you to accomplish, Mr. Bristol."

"And I am eager to do it. Can I count on your help?"

"To the last extreme, sir."

"Unt py ching, you can count me in dot, too!"

"All right, Mr. Schloss; the more the merrier. It is likely to prove a hard nut to crack."

"What is your theory?" inquired Druce.

"No use trying to frame one, yet," answered the detective. "Close inquiry must be made, till we find something to work upon. We will go and see your man Whitney, in a few minutes."

"Whenever you are ready."

Dick turned to the doctor.

"What do you think of the man?" he asked.

"His chances are about even," was the response. "As I said once before, nursing may pull him through."

"And that he shall have, the best that woman can give," spoke up Miss McLean. "I shall take my place here by his side, and will not leave him until he is out of danger."

"But this is no place for you," interposed Druce.

"It is my place, Mr. Druce," the firm reply.

"But, think of the criticism it may—"

"That for the criticism," cried the girl, snapping her fingers. "It is my duty to be here."

Druce was turning pale and dark by turns, and it could be seen plainly that he did not approve of the plans. Was it jealousy alone? or, was Deadwood Dick right?

"Well, it is your own choice," he said, doggedly. "Come, Mr. Bristol, we will go down."

"Yaw, dis vas no blaces for us," said the German. "Der toctor und de nurse vas enough to peen here, maype. Ve goes down unt dry to find oudt who done der peesness."

"That is the ticket, my man," said Dick.

They left the room.

"That girl is doing a foolish thing," muttered Druce, on the way down.

"She has declared openly that she loves the man, though," said Deadwood Dick, "and she feels that she is doing her duty."

"Well, let her go it. She is not the only one who loves him, whether she knows it or not."

"Ha! is that so?"

"Yes, it is."

"This may be a clew to the whole matter, then," said Dick.

"How is that?"

"Her rival may have been the one who attempted his life, feeling that her own case was hopeless."

Druce started.

"I had not thought of that, sir," he said. "But, it is too horrible a thing to think of Diamond Dell."

"Who is this Diamond Dell?"

"A girl sport here at Church City."

"I will have to make her acquaintance."

"That will be easy enough to do. She can be seen around any evening, and always spends an hour or two in the Crystal Parlors."

"What kind of a place is that?"

"The leading gaming establishment of the camp."

"Oh! I see."

They had by this time reached the lower floor, and Druce led the way into the barroom.

"Whitney," he said to a man who was plainly in charge of things there, "this gentleman wants to ask you some questions. Tell him everything you can."

"Certainly," said the man, promptly enough. "But, is it true that George wasn't killed after all?"

"Yes, it is true; he has about an even chance for his life."

"Thank God for that. Good fellow, George Banks."

"What was the first you knew of the matter?" inquired Dick.

"When the chamber woman went into that room to do it up, she found the man lying there the same as you saw it, and she let out a yell that startled the whole house."

"And there was no clew."

"None."

"Mr. Druce here has said that he expected Banks to come to the house this morning, and that he had left word with you to tell him that the appointment was off for the time being. Did you tell the man so?"

"Yes, I told him."

"What did he say?"

"He had some books with him, which he said he would leave in his room till noon, to save the trouble of carrying them back again, and he went up. That was the last I saw of him alive. It is the most puzzling thing that we have ever had here at Church City."

"And you saw no suspicious character prowling around, or no one leave the house on whom suspicion might fall?"

"No, no one of that character was around here. It is a complete riddle."

"Did you see anything of Diamond Dell around about that time?"

CHAPTER XII.

DICK MEETS DIAMOND DELL.

Deadwood Dick was amazed.

The effect of the question upon the man was startling.

He paled to the lips, and grabbed the back of a chair for momentary support.

"What is the matter?" asked Dick.

"You are not ill?"

"You—you cannot think that she did it, can you?" the man gasped.

"It is as plain as day that somebody did it," said Dick. "We must try to ascertain who it was."

"But, why in heavens do you mention her?"

"Because I have heard that she loved the man."

"Then would she not be the last person in the world to kill him?"

"One would naturally think so, but if he loved another and she saw that her love was hopeless—"

"No, no, she did not do it; that is impossible, sir."

"You appear to take interest in her."

"I do."

"What is your interest?"

"Why, he loves the woman," said Druce.

"Oh-ho!" exclaimed Dick. "That is the way of it, eh?"

Whitney's paleness was deathlike, now, and he was trembling with suppressed excitement.

Deadwood Dick saw what was the matter. From accusing Diamond Dell, it was only a step to a natural suspicion against this man, and Whitney evidently read his mind.

"You may as well accuse me and be done with it," he said, "though I swear before God that I know nothing about it."

"Why should I accuse you?" asked Dick.

"What need to ask that? By removing Banks, would I not be putting my rival out of the way?"

"But, he did not love Diamond Dell, it appears."

"No matter; she loved him; that was enough. Go on, now; say that I tried to kill him, and arrest me."

"But, you did not do it," said Dick. He spoke candidly.

A ray of hope appeared in the man's eyes.

"Then you believe me?" he cried.

"Yes."

"It is true, I swear it. I know nothing about it."

"But, nevertheless, you are inclined to think that maybe Diamond Dell was the one—"

"No, no, you are wrong there. She would not do it."

"Well, no matter; let us get back to the first question: Did you see anything of Diamond Dell around here about that time?"

The man had slightly recovered himself, but he paled again at the question and his hesitancy was the answer. Clearly, he had seen her at a time that would appear suspicious.

"Where was it you saw her?" Dick urged. "You may as well give the exact time and place. It can do her no harm if innocent, and if guilty you can do her no good by trying to hold it back. The best way is to speak right out and let me have the facts."

"She is innocent, I can swear to that. The fact of the business is, she went out of the gulch on her horse before Banks came down from the mine."

"You are sure of that?"

"Yes."

"Very good. If that can be proven, there is no harm can come to Diamond Dell."

"And there is little question but that it is straight," said Mr. Druce. "Whitney here is all right, and no wonder that he appeared a little cut up, under the circumstances."

"Not at all," agreed Dick. "Do not imagine that I am suspecting you, at this stage of the game, Mr. Whitney."

"It is like the boss says, it cut me up," said the man.

They left him, and Dick and Druce strolled out on to the piazza, where they found the mayor.

He had preceded them in coming down from Banks's room.

"What is this story the nigger and Schloss are giving out, about the finding of Morgan Mansfield's body in a cavern?" the mayor demanded.

"You have got it straight," said Druce. "That is the fact of the business, and I would suggest that you send out men and have it brought here to the camp."

"What for?"

"What for! Why, there was a price on his head, you know, and proof of his death will be worth something to somebody, that's what."

"And the man who made the discovery will get the reward, of course."

"I will waive that in your favor, sir," said Deadwood Dick. "It will be a favor if you will have that body brought in, as Mr. Druce has suggested. There is no doubt of the interest it will be to your citizens."

"Well, you are right, of course. I'll see to it."

He remained a few minutes, talking, then took leave, and Dick and Druce were alone together.

"Now, Mr. Druce, what is your candid opinion?" asked Dick.

"I am puzzled, utterly," was the response.

"You can advance no theory?"

"None."

"Do you think Diamond Dell did the deed?"

"I do not."

"And you likewise hold John Whitney to be innocent?"

"I do."

"Well, is there any one else against whom suspicion can point, that you can think of?"

"No, unless— But, no, that is out of reason."

"What were you going to say?"

"No matter."

"It may be the very thought that will put a clew in my way, sir."

"No, that is impossible. I was thinking of Poker Polly, at the moment, but it is idle to think of her as guilty."

"And who is this Poker Polly?"

"Another of about Diamond Dell's stamp. They are both live girls, as you will find."

"Then had she a liking for Banks, too?"

"Well, yes and no. The fact of the matter is, there has always been something peculiar about Poker Polly, ever since she came here. Something that I have not been able to understand."

"What is it like?"

"Mystery. There is more to that girl than appears on top, and I know it, but what it is I can't make out."

"How long has she been here?"

"A month or so."

"And you know nothing about her even yet, eh?"

"That is the matter in a nutshell. There is something about her that I can't get at."

"Yet she is familiar?"

"As much so as Diamond Dell. Mind you, they are both proper young women, far as I know. Never heard a breath against the character of either. They are sports, that's all."

"I understand you, sir. I am somewhat desirous of making their acquaintance now."

"Ha! here comes one of them now."

He indicated down the gulch, and Dick saw a young woman approaching on horseback.

"And which one is this?" Dick inquired.

"Diamond Dell."

"Then Whitney told the truth so far as her going out on horseback was concerned."

"Oh, yes, there was no room to doubt what Whitney told you. Still, he would not be likely to know it, nor any one else, if Diamond Dell did the deed."

"That is reasonable."

The young woman rode straight on to the piazza, where she leaped out of the saddle as lightly as a fairy, and turning immediately to Druce, she demanded:

"Tell me, is it true what I hear? that George Banks has been murdered!"

CHAPTER XIII.

POKER POLLY APPEARS.

She was a beauty.

Her face was aflush with exercise, and her dark eyes were full of life fires.

Richly clad, yet plainly, with a superb figure and a rich head of hair, she was a handsomer woman than Myrtle McLean, as Deadwood Dick mentally drew comparison.

She did not look at Dick, but straight at Druce.

"Well, an attempt was made upon his life, but he was not killed," the latter responded.

"I wonder who can have done it. I met him in the hall when I was leaving the hotel for my morning ride, and he was full of health and spirits then. How could any one do such a thing!"

Druce looked at Dick, and the woman followed his eyes.

"Your statement does not tally with what John Whitney has said," Druce declared. "But, of course, he had an object in what he said."

The woman's color vanished for a moment, and she asked:

"What do you mean?"

"He was sure that you had left the

house before Banks came down from the mine. This gentleman, by the way, is Mr. Richard Bristol, better known as Deadwood Dick."

She started.

"Indeed! Is it possible?"

Druce continued the introduction, and Dick rose as the woman bowed in acknowledgment of it.

"Not only possible, but the simple fact, madam," answered Dick. "Let me assure you that I am charmed to make the acquaintance of one so lovely, and hope that we may be friends."

It was a bold speech, and the young woman flushed.

"We shall very probably see more of each other, if you remain long here," she rejoined. "But, about what Whitney said, Mr. Druce; why was my name mentioned in connection with the affair?"

Druce looked at the detective.

"Let me answer your question," said Dick. "You evidently know what my vocation is, madam. I began at once looking around for a clew to the crime, and inquiry brought out mention of your name."

"And you thought that I had done it!"

"I made some slight inquiry concerning you, of Mr. Whitney, enough to satisfy me that it could not have been you. Could I have seen you, the inquiry would have been needless. Whitney evidently desired to remove the suspicion, for a good reason."

"I will thank him to tell the truth hereafter, however. I left the house after George Banks came from the mine, as I say. But, what motive could you find against me, Mr. Bristol?"

"There was no sufficient motive, but there was the thought that perhaps you had removed him to rob a rival of his affection—"

"Ha! ha! Why not look after the rival, then?"

"Miss McLean?"

"Yes."

"Why, she had no possible motive. What is more, she was out of town, as I happen to know personally."

A smile played for an instant upon the woman's lips. At the time, Dick wondered what it meant. Later, he recalled it, and the explanation was all too plain.

"How do you know she was out of town?" she asked.

"Because, I fell in with her, under peculiar circumstances, and had the pleasure of her company into the camp. Mr. Druce can tell you the same, as he was one of the party."

Her face was serious again in an instant.

"Oh, I would not doubt your word, sir," she said. "Where is the young lady now?"

"She has taken upon herself the task of nursing Mr. Banks."

"Indeed!"

Se lifted her brows in a way that meant more than mere surprise at the information.

More than that, there was just the suggestion of a look of triumph on her face, and her eyes turned for the briefest space of time upon Mr. Druce. He did not note it, but Deadwood Dick did.

A few more remarks of a passing nature, and she passed into the house. A man had taken charge of her horse.

"Well, what do you think of her?" asked Druce.

"She is a bute," said Dick.

"Needless to tell any one that. I mean, what do you think of her with regard to the crime?"

"I believe her innocent of it."

"Well, I am not going to dispute it, for it would be hard to believe her otherwise. But, you have a quick way of arriving at the guilt or innocence of a person, it seems to me."

"I have called no one guilty, as yet."

"No, but I infer that you would be just as quick to do that."

"Well, I won't deny it. Let me get my eye upon the right one, and I will soon tell you who it is."

"Then I hope you will soon get your eye upon him. This attempted murder shall not go unavenged if I can help it, I assure you. Do your best in the matter, Bristol."

Their conversation was carried to some length, but it contained nothing of further, or, rather, immediate, interest.

They were about parting company, when another young woman came out of the hotel.

"Ah! one minute," Mr. Druce detained Dick.

"What is it, sir?"

"Here is the other lady we have been speaking about, Poker Polly. Let me introduce you."

"Nothing can please me more, at short notice," said Dick, turning back and joining Mr. Druce. "They are three of a kind, that is evident," he said. "Three beauties."

"Yes, you are right. Poker Polly, one moment."

She stopped and turned toward him.

"Will you allow me to introduce my friend, Mr. Richard Bristol, better known as Deadwood Dick—"

"Deadwood Dick."

"That is the name by which I am best known," said Dick, bowing.

"The man of all men I was desirous of falling in with! Mr. Druce, you have rendered me a greater service than you think."

The young woman had given a great start, at mention of the name, and, as if it were the recoil, Druce now started and stared at her. All three were evidently surprised.

Poker Polly was not so handsome as Diamond Dell, but was more of Myrtle McLean's order of beauty. She, as well as Myrtle, looked less the sport than Diamond Dell, but yet, as Deadwood Dick had already said of them, they made three of a kind effectually.

"You desired to fall in with him?" said Druce, surprisedly.

"Yes. I had heard a good deal about him, you see, and have never had the pleasure of meeting him."

"The pleasure is all mine," said Dick, gallantly. "I was on the point of taking a little stroll up the gulch, and if you are disengaged and will do me the honor—"

"We can go a little way, but not far, for it is too near dinner time," said the young woman. "I shall be delighted."

So, they set forth.

Robert Druce looked after them from the piazza, and shook his head.

"So you were desirous of falling in with me, were you?" Deadwood Dick began conversation with the young woman.

"Yes, and not without an object."

"So I inferred. Well, here I am, and ready to render you any service in my power. You have only to tell me what you want of me."

"It may be a service greater than you will care to undertake, when you have heard what it is, and the more especially when I tell you that I am almost at the end of my means here and can pay you only with my thanks."

"The more reason why I should aid

you, then. Your thanks will more than repay me, I am sure. Evidently, then, your name is a misnomer, unless it is to express that poker is your besetting sin and that the profits in the game go to the other players. How is it?" lightly.

She shook her head disdainfully.

"That is only a name that I have taken to disguise my real one," she openly declared. "I am only a novice at the game, losing more than I gain, as all novices do."

CHAPTER XIV.

DIAMOND DELL ACCUSED.

Deadwood Dick was surprised, yet not surprised.

While her name had given him the idea that she was a feminine poker sport, before seeing her, her appearance had somewhat belied that estimation of her when they met.

He made no immediate rejoinder, leaving it for her to speak further of herself if inclined to do so.

She, however, maintained silence, too.

"Well, your name and your appearance do not quite tally, that is true, Poker Polly," said Dick, presently.

"How do you mean?" she asked him.

"Well, I would—and did—expect to find a person more on the order of Diamond Dell."

"Then you have met her?"

"Yes."

"What do you think of her?"

"That she is a dashing, dare-devil girl sport of Church City. Nothing wrong about her, perhaps, and nothing over good."

Poker Polly laughed lightly.

"I believe you have formed a pretty close estimate," she said. "While I do not love her by any means, I have nothing against her in particular. She has served me a good purpose since I have been here."

"How is that?"

"I have patterned after her somewhat in carrying out my own disguise, or assumed character."

"I see."

"My real name is Mary Pearson."

"You need not have felt under obligation to tell me your real name, Miss Pearson."

"I desired you to know it. In seeking your aid, it was impossible for me to think of holding anything back, even were there reason why I should, which there is not."

"So much the better, then."

"I have not dared breathe to a single soul here what I most desire to know, for fear that I might repose confidence in the wrong person, and so place my own life in danger."

"Your life in danger?"

"Yes; or frustrate the plans of the man I am seeking, if no harm has come to him."

"You interest me, Miss Pearson."

"I hope to interest you to the extent of winning your willing service in my behalf."

"You have it already, if what you desire is honest, and I have no doubt on that score. You have only to tell me your story, and I will weigh the matter."

"I can never sufficiently thank you. I had almost made up my mind to take George Banks into my confidence and try to enlist his aid, but now he has been killed—or nearly so—and that door closed to me. But you, you have come as a help in time of need."

"Vell, by ching!" suddenly exclaimed another voice. "You vas a ladies' mans, and now you are a deadwood tick!"

They had come suddenly upon Schloss, or he upon them.

"I have a weakness that way, I admit it," said Dick, with a smile.

"Yaw, yaw, I should t'ink you had, too, py ching! First id vas Myrtle McLean, unt den id vas Tiamond Tell, unt now id vas Boker Bolly. Py ching, but dot vas rushing peesness, maype!"

"Maybe it is, my Teuton friend, but I can't help it. It is the way I am made up, you see. There is a fascination in a pretty face that I cannot resist, no matter how hard I might try, and when I do not try at all you can see for yourself what's the result."

Dick noticed that the young woman had scarcely noticed the Dutchman, but stood scraping the ground impatiently with one foot.

"Yaw, yaw, dot vas id, I reckons. Vell, vell, go id vwhile you vas young, anyway."

With that he passed on his way, and Dick and Mary on theirs.

"What do you think of that man?" the girl asked, seriously.

"In what respect?" queried Dick.

"General."

"Seems like a good, jolly, honest German, far as one can judge."

"Nothing more?"

Dick recalled what Myrtle McLean had said regarding him, and wondered if he had impressed this girl the same way.

"Nothing more," he answered.

"Then I must be mistaken, of course," she said.

"Why, what is your opinion of the man?"

"That he is not what he seems. I am rather afraid of him than otherwise."

"Why, he is apparently as harmless as a great big fond dog," said Dick. "What has given you that impression concerning him?"

"I do not know, but it is there. And yet I do, too. He appears to be watching me, for some purpose, and I have had him come upon me suddenly many times, the same as on this occasion."

"Well, I'll tell you what I will do. I will give some attention to Mr. Schloss, and size him up for you."

"If you only would, sir."

"I will."

"What were we talking about?"

"You were about to tell me your story, I believe, in order that I might render you some service."

"That was it, and I will tell you now. But, let us turn back in the direction of the hotel, for we have gone far enough, and dinner will be ready by the time we get there."

"As you please, miss."

They turned, and the first thing to catch Dick's eye as they did so was his man Whitewash running toward them.

"Hi, boss!" the black fellow was shouting, or did shout, on seeing his master turn. "Hump yo'se'f, fo' yo' is wanted at de hotel, double-quick! Mars Druce hab done found a clue."

"A clue to the murder—attempted murder?" queried Miss Pearson.

"I suppose so," said Dick.

"And your black man is coming right on, so I will have to defer my story for the time being."

"I can send him back in more haste than he came—"

"No, no; it does not matter. It will keep, and I will see you again this afternoon or evening."

"As you please; I am ready to serve you."

By that time Whitewash had come up.

"Well, my calla lily, what is it all about, anyhow?" demanded Dick.

"Mistah Druce he sent me on de tall hustle to git you, sah, and tell you he hab done found a clue."

"So you said before, or words to that effect. But, what is the clue? What has he discovered? Has he found out who it was did the dastardly deed?"

"I 'speck he hab, sah. He didn't tell me, sah."

"Well, the quickest way to ascertain is to go and see. Am I walking too fast for you, Miss Pearson?"

"Oh, no, sir."

So they proceeded, with Whitewash close behind them, and for the time being Dick was kept in ignorance of what the young woman desired of him.

Arriving at the hotel, Druce was seen pacing the floor of the piazza, his face cold and hard in expression. He did not appear to be in the least excited, and had probably told no one what he had found.

"Sorry to break up your walk," he said, "but I have found out something."

"I hope the discovery will compensate for the pleasure you have robbed me of," said Dick.

He lifted his hat to the young woman as he spoke, and she bowed and passed on into the house.

"I don't know anything about that," was the grim rejoinder, "but I do know that it is a most disagreeable one for me."

"Well, what is it?"

"Diamond Dell is the one who attempted that murder."

CHAPTER XV.

DICK SURE OF HIS GROUND.

Deadwood Dick looked at the man in surprise.

What had he discovered, since Dick had seen him last, to so change his mind?

"That is pretty hard to swallow, sir," said Dick. "I had made up my mind that she must be entirely innocent of any part in the matter."

"And so had I, too, but facts are stubborn things, as you must be aware yourself, of all men, and I have found a fact that will be likely to put her in a bad situation, if made known."

"And you mean to make it known, I see."

"I will tell you, and you can do as you please about letting it out."

"You know very well, or should, at any rate, that Deadwood Dick stops at nothing to reach justice."

"So I believed, and that is what I want done here. Banks was too valuable a man for me to lose in any way, to say nothing about assassination."

"Well, your discovery—what is it?"

"Blood."

"Where?"

"Where it might have been found before, if we had taken the precaution to look."

Deadwood Dick made no comment upon that, but waited to hear more. If the man had known Deadwood Dick for his full worth, he would have considered it doubtful that anything could have escaped his eyes.

"It is up there in the hall," Druce continued. "I happened to think of it, and went up to look, when the hall was clear. It was not too light when we were up there, you remember. I threw the front shutters open wide to get all the light possible."

Dick bowed and continued his attention.

"Well, I searched well," Druce continued, "and I was soon rewarded. I found a drop of blood not far from the door of George's room, another a few feet further on, still another after that,

"then a slight smear on the door of Diamond Dell's room. You see where it points? She was not in her room, and I entered and looked around."

"And found further evidence, of course," said Dick.

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I say. It looks like a plain case, now, and if there was any blood inside the room, that would seem to settle it."

"Well, it is settled then. Besides the mark on the door, there was a drop on the floor, in direct line with the wash stand, and there was a smear of blood on the outside of the wash bowl."

"You don't say?"

"What do you think of that?"

"Why, you have amazed me, sir. It is hard to believe."

"But, it is there for you to see for yourself. Come right along with me."

"But, suppose she is now in her room."

"Then let her say how the blood came there if she can. You remember how cut up Whitney was."

"Yes, I remember that."

"Well, he may have known more than he cared to tell."

"In fact, he defended the woman to the last gasp, as it were, and when she returned she upset it all."

"That's so."

"And that spoke for her innocence."

"She must have done it for effect, I should think, now."

"But, if guilty, why did she not accept the scheme Whitney had arranged for her?"

"You still believe her innocent, I see."

"Must do so, till she has been proven guilty. It is a deep affair, Mr. Druce."

"Yes, you are right it is. But, unless this woman can say how the blood came there, we shall soon solve the enigma, I think."

At that moment the call to dinner was sounded.

"I guess we shall have to defer it for a little while," suggested Deadwood Dick. He had a motive in saying it.

"Not at all," urged Druce. "This will be our opportunity; as soon as we are sure that Diamond Dell has come down to the dining-room we will go up, and the coast will be clear."

"Yes, that's so."

"Besides, I must relieve Miss McLean so that she can take her dinner."

Deadwood Dick instantly believed that his former hideous suspicion against this man was confirmed, hearing this.

He made no rejoinder, and they waited where they could see.

As soon as Diamond Dell had come down and entered the dining-room, they hurried up the stairs.

The shutters at the end of the hall had been closed in again, Druce making remark that he had done it after the examination he had made, and he now opened them again.

Plenty of light was admitted into the hall, though it had been by no means dark before.

That done, Druce led Dick to the place where the blood was.

True enough, here was a drop, plainly to be seen, and further along another, and others.

On the door of Diamond Dell's room, too, was a smear, and Druce opened the door cautiously, after glancing around to see that no one was watching, and they entered.

There was another drop, as had been described, and some was on the outside of the wash-bowl.

"What did I tell you?" demanded Druce.

"The truth, evidently," answered Dick.

"Yes, the truth. Now, what will you do in the matter?"

"What do you think ought to be done?"

"I hate to say arrest the woman, for fear that there may be a mistake in spite of all this."

"Yet you think she did it?"

"How can I help it?"

"Was the motive great enough?"

"It certainly must have been, if she did it."

"That is just the point—if she did it. This does not prove it."

"Well, that is so, but the evidence is so damaging that it cannot be passed over lightly."

"There are only two courses open to us."

"And they are—"

"Arrest her or not arrest her."

"And which shall it be?"

"For my own part, I say not arrest her. Let the matter stand as it is until we can further fasten the thing where it belongs."

"She may escape, meantime."

"Not at all. If innocent she will remain, and if guilty she will face it out on the line she has already taken up. There is no danger as far as that is concerned."

"Well, you are the better judge of that, of course. I have disclosed my discovery to you, and can do no more than that."

"I will keep the evidence in mind, be sure of it."

"What now?"

"To the other room, and then to dinner."

"Ah! yes. You may escort Miss McLean down, and I will stay with poor George, meantime."

"By the way," added Dick, "I would like that privilege myself, if he is conscious. If not, of course it will not matter so much. I am eager to hear what he can tell us."

"And so am I," assured Druce.

He tapped at the door, and a feminine voice bade them enter.

They did so, and found Miss McLean sitting close to the bedside of the wounded man, he holding her hand.

The man was conscious, as was seen at once, and there was on his face a look of perfect peace and composure. Myrtle did not withdraw her hand from his clasp.

Deadwood Dick glanced at his companion, and found that his lips were set in a hard, straight line, and that his face was pale, while his eyes had a baleful light in their depths. What they beheld there told its own story, and there was no need for explanation.

CHAPTER XVI.

THAT BODY BROUGHT IN.

Druce recovered himself instantly, when he felt Deadwood Dick's searching eyes upon him, and advanced straight to the bed.

"How do you feel, George?" he inquired, solicitously.

"Rather sore in one spot, but the doctor says he thinks I will pull through, Mr. Druce," was the response.

"I am glad to hear that, decidedly. By the way, have you any knowledge who it was struck you the cowardly blow? That is the important item we are after at present."

"No, I did not see the person," was the response. "I was struck on the head first, and the next I knew, after feeling the sting of the knife that immediately followed, I was lying here on my back

with this dear girl bending over me—God bless her!"

He clasped the willing hand more firmly and fondled it.

Druce's face was like an approaching thunderstorm in spite of his evident attempt to look pleasant.

"She has been as true as gold to you, that is the fact," said Druce. "By the way, Miss McLean, let me take your place while you go to dinner and refresh yourself for an hour or so."

"No, I thank you, kindly, Mr. Druce, but my place is here," was the firm return.

"Nonsense! He is better, and you certainly cannot go without eating. Go and get your dinner, while Mr. Bristol and I talk with George a little."

She looked at Dick appealingly.

"Yes, go," assented Dick. "I will remain with Mr. Druce, and you certainly can trust your patient to both of us for that little time."

"Well, if you both insist upon it—"

"We do," from Druce.

She stooped and whispered a few words to Banks, and left the room, giving Deadwood Dick a meaning glance in passing.

Dick was most convenient to the chair she had just vacated, and he dropped into it with apparent unconcern and lack of design, leaving Druce to take another.

"Have you any idea who it can have been that stabbed you?" he inquired.

"Not the slightest, sir. You are Deadwood Dick? Myrtle has told me all about you. No, I cannot guess who it was."

"Then we are as much in the dark as ever," observed Druce. "We were in hopes that you would be able to shed some light on the matter as soon as you came to, George."

"It is too bad, but I am only too thankful that I came to at all."

"Yes, of course."

"Do you think it was Diamond Dell?" asked the detective.

"Diamond Dell? Good heavens, no! Why should she strike me such a cowardly blow as that?"

"I am given to understand that she loves you, and seeing that your favor was shown to Miss McLean she might have decided to remove you; that is the only motive."

"It is too weak, sir. Besides, I would not believe it of her. No, I cannot believe it of her—in fact, I know that she did not do it, sir."

"You are sure of that? There is a trail of blood leading to her room, and that will have to be accounted for."

Druce glanced at Dick quickly, as if wondering why he had exposed that so soon.

"A trail of blood to her room?" repeated George.

"Yes."

"Then the wretch who struck me retreated there to escape, for she was not there herself. I passed her in the hall as I came up, and heard her go off the piazza as I reached the top of the stairs."

Dick now looked at Druce.

"Does that satisfy you?" he demanded.

"But, maybe she came back and crept up behind you," Druce suggested, to Banks.

"No, no; you wrong her," answered the wounded man, earnestly. "Whoever my intended assassin was, he was concealed in the hall, and struck me when I was entering the door of my room."

"You think it was a man?" asked Dick.

"Yes, a man."

"Why?"

"I heard one step, and a heavy one. I

was about turning my head when I got the blow."

"This would seem to clear Diamond Dell, Mr. Druce," remarked Dick. "I am of the opinion that I was right in estimating her as innocent. What do you think yourself?"

"It must be so," Druce agreed. "By the way," he added, "you may as well go down and get your dinner. You have learned all you can here, and there is no need of both staying. I will remain with George until Miss McLean returns."

"No, you go and let me stay," urged Dick. "There are a few questions I would like to ask him in private."

Druce's face was clouded, but there was no way out of it.

"Well, if you insist," he said. "I will call in and see you again later, George."

"By the way, Mr. Druce," the wounded man detained him; "I wish you would get word to that preacher and have him come up here this afternoon—"

"You don't imagine you are going to croak?"

"No, no; it is not that. Miss McLean insists upon remaining here as my nurse, and as she has promised to marry me we have decided to have the ceremony at once to still idle tongues."

Druce blanched, and could not help showing his feelings.

For a second he hesitated, but quickly said:

"All right; I will send the word as you desire."

He left the room instantly.

"Now, my friend, see here," said Deadwood Dick in low tone the moment the door had closed. "Did Miss McLean tell you anything of the suspicion I expressed to her?"

"No; she did not."

"Then I must. That man is your bitter foe; I am sure of it, and you must be on your guard against him. Have you got a pistol anywhere about the room?"

"In the hip of my trousers there, in the closet."

Dick rose and got it.

"Here; keep it in the bed with you, and do not hesitate to use it if occasion requires."

"But, sir, you must surely be mistaken. It cannot be possible that Robert Druce has any designs against my life. Where can be his motive, if you are right?"

"Myrtle McLean!"

"My God!"

"Can you believe it now?"

"No, no, not yet; it seems impossible; and yet—"

"Keep your eyes wide open!" warned Dick. "Above all things, look out for poison! Refuse anything that comes up from below, unless he will allow Myrtle to taste it first."

"You have shocked me beyond expressing," asserted Banks. "Do not breathe it to any one else, for fear you may be mistaken."

"It was necessary to warn you, in case I am not mistaken."

They had talked but a few minutes longer when Myrtle reappeared, bearing some food for her patient.

"You must have eaten in a hurry," intimated Dick.

"Yes, I did, and then I prepared something with my own hands for my patient."

"You did wrong in not telling him, and so putting him on his guard," chided Dick. "I have done so, and, between you, you should be able to ward off danger if it threatens."

"And has George told you another secret?"

"Yes; and I will be present."

Dick left them, thereupon, and repaired to the dining-room, where he found Druce eating.

They fell into conversation, and after the repast went out to the piazza to smoke. They had been there but a little while when their attention was drawn to a crowd coming down the gulch.

At first glance they were at a loss to account for the demonstration, but the appearance of Mayor Hogan and a word from him gave them the cue.

They were bringing in the body of Morgan Mansfield.

CHAPTER XVII.

SCHLOSS SPEAKS OUT.

"Why, on my word, that matter had entirely slipped my mind," declared Druce.

"And mine, too, for the moment, owing to press of other things," returned Deadwood Dick. "There will no doubt be an exciting time, now."

"Very likely. If the man were only alive there would be what we used to call a hanging-bee in the days gone by—in fact, as we still call it in the wilds."

Church City boasted that it was within the bounds of civilization.

The crowd came on, bearing their ghastly burden among them, and at last laid it down in the open space before the hotel.

"Thar he is," cried out one man; "ther pizenest varmint that ever crawled the face of the earth! Lucky fur him that he is dead, or we would soon make him so, I'm shoutin'."

"You bet we would."

"Three cheers for the man that took 'venge upon him!"

The crowd needed no urging, and the cheers rang out with a royal good will.

Men pressed around on every side to get a look at the face of the dead man, and it was impossible for more than a small portion of them to see anything at all.

"What will you do with it, mayor?" asked Druce.

"I don't know; what would you say do with it?"

"I would say bury it out of sight just as soon as possible."

"Hold on," interposed Deadwood Dick. "As I was the discoverer of it, I hope I may be allowed some say in the matter."

"That is about right, I reckon," said the mayor.

"Then suppose you have it laid out in state, in some handy place, and give the people of your camp a chance to look at the infamous wretch before you bury him."

"Not a bad suggestion, I reckon."

"What is to be gained by such a course as that?" queried Druce.

"Well, one thing, positive identification, concerning which there must be no doubt," answered Dick.

"Yes, that is true; I had not thought of it in that light. I did not suppose there could be a question as to the identity, after what you told me of the inscription on the wall."

"Nor is it likely that there will be, either. If none such is raised, then we will be doubly assured of the fact that it was Mansfield."

"That is so, and you are right."

Meanwhile, the crowd was pressing around, and in order to break it up the mayor shouted out an order for the temporary disposition of the body.

When it had been taken away, he joined Dick and Druce on the piazza, and there the events of the day were gone over carefully, when it was found that

they were really in more of a maze of mystery than ever.

A considerable time was thus passed, and the afternoon was waning.

They were still talking, when Poker Polly came out of the house and, looking around, espied Mr. Druce and advanced to him.

"Well, my girl, what is it?" Druce patronizingly asked.

"I have just come down from Mr. Banks's room, and he desired me to ask you if you had forgotten your promise."

"My promise—"

"Concerning Mr. Stout, the minister."

"By Scott! I had forgotten it clean. Why didn't you remind me of that, Bristol?"

"I intended doing so, ere long, or rather asking if you had seen about it," said Dick. "Let us look after it, by all means, Mr. Druce."

"Certainly, and at once. Poker Polly, you just tell them to make ready, and we'll be there just as soon as we can get the parson. Matters of this sort don't happen every day."

Druce called to an idle fellow who was passing.

"Here, you, hustle around and see if Parson Stout is at home, and tell him to come here immediately."

He flipped the fellow a coin, and he was off in haste upon his errand. They resumed their conversation, then, pending his return, and in due time the man was back again.

"Well?" asked Druce.

"Ther parson has been called away," he reported, "and won't be back before termorrer."

"The mischief! That is bad, decidedly. But it will keep, and a day or so difference will not matter. If you will excuse me, Bristol, I will go up and tell them."

"Certainly."

Druce rose, and as he passed into the house Poker Polly came out.

Deadwood Dick joined her at once, and they set out for another stroll, this time in the other direction along the gulch.

"Now, for that story of yours," said Dick. "We were interrupted before, and now is our opportunity."

"Yes, and I am eager to tell it, for I need your aid. Somehow, I feel that something important is impending."

"Of what nature?"

"Concerning a mystery in which I am involved."

"Women sometimes foresee such events, by their peculiar sixth sense, as I will term it."

"I know it, and it is something that seldom or never fails, with me. But, let me tell you what brought me to this wild mountain town."

"I attend."

"Have you ever heard of Hartley Hains?"

"Hains, Hains—it seems to me I have heard that name before, but I forget where."

"He was a detective."

"Ha! to be sure. Yes, I have heard of him, Miss Pearson."

"Well, he was my lover, and we were engaged to be married, but he has disappeared utterly."

"That is strange, unless you know of some reason for his disappearance, which I take for granted you do not or you would mention it. And you look for him here?"

"Yes. He came here in search of that arch villain, Morgan Mansfield, whose body, I am told, has just been brought

into the camp. I am eager to see it, for I have a dread apprehension that he murdered my lover before he himself was killed."

"Vell, py ching! So, ve meets some more, hey?"

It was the jolly-faced Teuton, who again appeared suddenly before them in the most natural manner imaginable.

Dick noted at once that the young woman's eyes sought the ground, as before, and that she was ill at ease in this man's presence. This passingly, and he responded:

"Yes, we meet again, Dutchman. What is the good word with you this time?"

"Py ching, id vas all pad vords, may-pe! Vhat for doose a man wants to veer two faces mit himself alleweil, anyhow?"

Dick was interested.

"What do you mean?" he inquired.

"You wait; here cooms your mans Lamp-black, or vhat you calls him. He knows all aroudt it, too."

He indicated Whitewash, who was approaching.

Poker Polly was interested, now, and had removed her gaze from the ground and was studying the German.

"Golly, boss," exclaimed Whitewash, as soon as he came up, "de bery ol' debil gwine to be to pay 'roun' heah soon, you bet yo' bottom dollar on dat! Vhat yo' ink—"

"I think that you had better be a little more select in your language in the presence of a lady, for one thing. Go on, now, and let me hear what you have to say. Or, will you tell the story, Mr. Schloss?"

"Nein, nein! Let der plack mans tell d."

"Dis heah chil' can do it, too, you bet! Dat man Druce, boss, he say to a feller they call Pete Langton, he say, you go ell Passon Stout dat he am wanted in a hurry ober to Gold Crick Camp, and e passon he git up and git out in a hurry. Den, not long 'go, he send dat ame bum to de passon's house again to nd him."

Deadwood Dick saw it plainly.

"Yaw, ya", dot vas id!" spoke up Schloss, immediately, "unt vhen I hears ie dot I say mit meinsel—Dot vas omedings vhat Teadwood Tick ought to now 'poudt, unt py ching I dells him ooty gwick, aind't id? Vell, you pet me l vas! I got my eyes beeled on dot vellers, unt if you don't lay him py der eels, den py ching I do id meinsel, ght away soon!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

SPRINGING A SURPRISE.

Deadwood Dick looked at the man more senly than he had done before.

Schloss stood the test, however, and as the same jolly-faced but earnest utchman under close scrutiny.

"Don't you do anything in a hurry," ick suggested, and he said it positively. I will have a talk with you after awhile, id we will lay our heads together in reard to certain things."

"Yaw, yaw; dot vas good! Id don't atter mooch if one vas a cabbage head, long as de oder von has goot stuffin' id, mebbby."

Dick and Polly laughed, and they rned back again.

They left Schloss and Whitewash there gether, and Dick had given his aid a znal he understood.

Dick conducted his companion straight the place where the body of the outw had been taken, but the door was ked, and he had to knock and men-

tion the name of the mayor before they could get in.

The body was lying in a plain box, and had been made as presentable as possible, considering the conditions.

As soon as the cloth was drawn from over the face, the girl uttered a scream.

Deadwood Dick caught her in his arms as she fainted.

It was some minutes before Dick could bring her to, and even then it was only for a brief time. She uttered a name, and immediately went off into convulsions.

The name she uttered was—Hartley Hains!

Calling assistance, Dick carried the young woman from the building by a rear way and off to the home of William Schloss.

Schloss was not there himself, but Dick soon made the matter plain to the Frau Schloss, who took charge of the young woman and promised to give her the best of attention.

Dick then returned to the hotel, where he quietly sent for the doctor to go to the Schloss domicile.

Having done that, Dick sought out Schloss.

"Now, my man," he said, "you and I will have it out. You know who I am and all about me, and I want to know who you are and all about you."

"Vell, dot vas like peesness, anyvay," the German commented stoically, as he puffed his pipe. "I don't mind dellling you, seeing you vas Teadwood Tick, for I guess I need your help pooty bad before I gets done."

His story was simple but to the point. An honest, industrious, rancher, he had been induced to sell out with a prospect of bettering himself further West, and he had been robbed of the money by Morgan Mansfield. He was relentlessly on the trail of the outlaw.

After a conference with him, Dick left him and went to the hotel, where he sought out Druce.

"Here is a new complication," informed Dick.

"What is that?" was asked.

"A certain person here in the camp has recognized the body of our outlaw as somebody else."

Watching the man closely, without appearing to do so, he saw him start and his face change color at the disclosure.

"The mischief!" ejaculated Druce. "Who is that certain person you speak of, then? It must be some one who knew Morgan Mansfield well, to declare that this body is not his."

"On the contrary the person never saw Mansfield."

"Then how—"

"She recognized it as the body of some one she did know."

"A woman, hey? Is this a trick of Diamond Dell? If it is, she had better have a care—"

"No, no, you are wrong there. But, even so, would you not desire to have the exact truth, rather than have a mistake made and the outlaw left still at large?"

Druce eyed him keenly.

"Why, certainly, if there is room for a mistake," he assured.

"There is just that question of doubt. But, we will put it to the test to-morrow, when the body is viewed."

"Why not have the review now, and have it settled for once and all? What is the use of waiting? The sooner it is over the better, I should say. I will see the mayor."

"And here he comes. Now, a word, Mr. Druce. I want you to keep your eye on that Dutchman Schloss when he

views the body, and see what figure he cuts. I am not altogether satisfied with that chap, and would not be surprised if something came out through him."

Druce looked relieved, but puzzled.

"All right; I'll do it." And, the mayor coming up at that moment, the matter was laid before him.

"That is just in line with my plans," the mayor declared. "I intended having the public see the body right after the day's work closes. Might as well have it done with."

Leaving them to arrange the details, Dick Bristol entered the house for a purpose.

Slowly the crowd filed past the open coffin, which stood before a platform that had been arranged for the mayor and a few others, among whom were Mr. Druce, Deadwood Dick, and other men of good repute.

The people passed along, some of them muttering an oath as they looked upon the dead face, others calling down an imprecation, and not one having a word of sympathy for the man who had been brought to a just fate, as they all believed, according to the cavern inscription.

In due course came William Schloss, and those on the platform, having been posted, watched him narrowly. He stopped before the coffin, laid his hands upon it, and looked earnestly at the dead face.

"Py ching!" he suddenly exclaimed, "dot vas nicht Morgan Mansfield, no more as I vas meinsel!"

"How do you know that, my man?" asked Druce, from the platform.

With a leap the Dutchman was on the coffin, then on the platform, and his hand was at Druce's throat, while he cried:

"Pecause, py ching, you vas Morgan Mansfield yourself!"

With his free hand he jerked away the man's hat, and with it a wig, and, before the man could recover from his surprise, Deadwood Dick had handcuffs upon him!

If a bomb had exploded there, it could not have occasioned greater amazement in that crowd. Men and women stood and gaped, speechless, and as for the prisoner, his face was evidence of his guilt. He was like death; perspiration stood out on his forehead, and he trembled.

"Note him well," called out the detective. "Morgan Mansfield, what have you to say for yourself?"

The man stared; then with an effort he tried to recover himself, and he cried:

"It is a lie! What fool business is all this, anyhow?"

"Let us see," said Dick.

He gave a whistle; then there was a movement in the throng and some one was heard saying:

"Oh, it ain' no use, my laddybuck; yo' hab got to go right up dar an' face de music; yo' jes' bet yo' hab! Come along, fo' yo' am in de han's ob a son ob ol' Samson, I tol' yo'!"

Through the crowd came Whitewash, dragging Pete Langton after him, and Deadwood Dick reached down and jerked the man to the platform with a showing of muscle that was a surprise to all who witnessed the feat. And, once there, a pistol was clapped to the man's head.

"Now, then, a clean breast of it!" Dick ordered.

And that the fellow made. An ally of Morgan Mansfield, he had aided him in murdering Hartley Hains on the cliff trail and placing the body in the cavern, where the inscription was cut for the purpose

of deceiving. Mansfield wanted thus to cast off his past, and begin anew, having struck it rich at Church City, under another name and character.

He had not forgotten his oath that Myrtle McLean should one day become his wife, and he had lured her to Church City with that object in view. But, there she met and loved George Banks, although for a time the glitter of Druce's wealth had allured her in his direction. At last, however, under the crucial test, her heart had gone out in the right direction. But, she had had a rival, not for Banks, but for Druce, and that was Diamond Dell.

She it had been, as Deadwood Dick later disclosed, with proofs—as he had proofs for all—who had fired the shot at Myrtle that had so nearly proved the end of Dick himself. She had fired it from a secret cavity behind the face of the cliff, through a chink in the outward wall.

The desperate woman made her escape, however, and was not brought to punishment.

Druce, on the contrary, was hanged, as he deserved to be, and, as far as possible, his wealth was made to right the wrongs he had done in his evil lifetime.

Myrtle McLean and George Banks were married, and settled there at Church City until George had "made his pile."

Mary Pearson recovered, and returned sadly home, and to her Deadwood Dick gave the reward he had earned for bringing the notorious villain to justice.

Washington White remained at the camp; and there also dwells William Schloss and his family.

Deadwood Dick, of course, did not tarry long. The restless but seemingly tireless detective, his work there being rounded out in a signal success, departed silently from Church City, to respond to another appeal for his marvelous services.

THE END.

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